National Tribal Literary Festival Concludes with Emphasis on Preserving Oral Traditions and Promoting Contemporary Tribal Literature

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The two-day National Tribal Literary Festival, organised by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, concluded on 13 November 2026 with discussions on preserving India's rich tribal literary traditions and connecting indigenous knowledge and oral narratives with contemporary literary expression. Organised as part of the Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas celebrations, the festival brought together tribal writers, poets, researchers, linguists and scholars from across the country under the theme *'From Oral Tradition to Contemporary Tribal Literature'*.



The concluding day featured thematic discussions on oral epics and heroic traditions, the contribution of indigenous knowledge to multilingual education, and readings by emerging tribal writers and poets. The sessions highlighted how stories, songs, epics and poetry continue to preserve the collective memory, cultural identity and lived experiences of tribal communities.

Oral Epics and Heroic Traditions

Moderated by Shri Prakash Jha, the first session featured Shri Bhagwandas Patel, Shri Upendra Anu and Shri Mayanglambam Sadanand Singh. The speakers explored the oral literary heritage of the Bhil and Gond communities, including *Gond Ramayana* and *Bhil Mahabharata*, as well as Manipur's *Wari Leeba* storytelling tradition and the *Khamba-Thoibi* epic. The discussions highlighted the importance of documenting these traditions through audio-visual recordings and research, while recognising community storytellers and knowledge holders as custodians of tribal literary heritage.

Oral Traditions in Multilingual Education

The next session examined the role of indigenous languages and community knowledge in strengthening inclusive education. Moderated by Dr. K. Srinivasa Rao, former Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, the session featured Shri Anil Kumar Boro, Shri Sylvanus Lamare and Smt. Parvati Tirkey. The deliberations highlighted how oral narratives, traditional songs and community stories can enrich learning experiences and strengthen children's connections with their mother tongues and cultural identities. The speakers emphasised incorporating indigenous knowledge and oral traditions into educational processes, particularly in early childhood education, and discussed the role of documentation, translation and technology in supporting tribal languages.

Emerging Writers and Poets Bring Contemporary Tribal Experiences to the Fore

The final two sessions provided a platform for tribal writers and poets to showcase their creative works and share contemporary narratives rooted in their linguistic and cultural identities. In the story-reading session, chaired by Shri Mahadev Toppo, Smt. Neeta Kusum Bilung, Shri Ramesh Karthik Nayak and Shri Vasanth Kumar V.P. presented their stories, highlighting the diversity of tribal literary expression and the evolving experiences of tribal communities.

The poetry-reading session, moderated by Smt. Jogamaya Chakma, brought together poets representing diverse linguistic and cultural traditions. Shri K. Vasamalli, Shri Kriri Mog Chowdhury, Shri Babu Sangda, Shri Hirjir Ingti Katharpi, Shri Gopi Krishna Soni, Smt. Marina Ekka, Smt. Sudha Chauhan and Smt. Anjali Belagal recited their original compositions. The readings reflected the richness of tribal poetry and its engagement with community life, cultural memory, identity and contemporary social realities.

Expanding Recognition and Reach of Tribal Literature

During the valedictory session, Smt. Ranjana Chopra, Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, emphasised the need to create sustainable platforms for promoting tribal literature, supporting authors writing in indigenous languages and connecting them with publishers and wider readerships. She highlighted *Living Roots Originals*, an initiative developed in collaboration with the Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS) to recognise and protect the creative rights of tribal musicians and performers. She also highlighted the Ministry's initiative to facilitate a dedicated section for tribal literature at the National Book Trust's forthcoming book fair at Pragati Maidan, providing tribal authors and publishers an opportunity to showcase their works and reach wider audiences.

Dr. K. Srinivasa Rao summarised the two-day festival, highlighting the representation of 27 languages, including 23 tribal languages. He emphasised that tribal literature is an integral part of India's cultural heritage and underscored the need for its greater inclusion in

university curricula, translation initiatives and mainstream publishing platforms to ensure wider recognition and dissemination.



In his concluding remarks, Shri Ganesh Nagarajan, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, highlighted the significant expansion of the Ministry's cultural, linguistic and livelihood initiatives over the past year. He expressed appreciation to the scholars, authors, poets, moderators and participants for their valuable contributions to the festival.

In line with the Prime Minister's vision of inclusive development and guided by the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and 'Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi', the National Tribal Literary Festival reaffirmed the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' commitment to bringing indigenous literary voices into the national discourse and ensuring that India's tribal literary heritage remains an integral part of the journey towards Viksit Bharat@2047.

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