



दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय
University of Delhi



Report
Janjatiya Gaurav
Varsh 2025
13- 15 November 2025

Organised by
Centre for Tribal Studies
University of Delhi
Delhi-110007



REPORT

JANJATIYA GAURAV VARSH 2025
13-15 November 2025
Centre for Tribal Studies, University of Delhi

Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh 2025 brought together a vibrant yet thoughtful blend of academic activities and cultural celebrations. There were panel discussions and conferences in which scholars and students participated, while exhibitions, cultural performances, and creative competitions in photography, reel-making, painting, and tribal dance added vitality to the event. The celebration successfully celebrated the intellectual heritage and vibrant cultural traditions of India's tribal communities. The celebration drew a large number of teachers and students, many of whom attended in traditional attire, reflecting unity, respect, and pride in India's tribal cultures. During the three-day programme, diverse perspectives converged to provide a platform for substantive dialogue on tribal histories, contemporary challenges, and avenues for inclusive development.

Report compiled by
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The Centre for Tribal Studies, University of Delhi, organised Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh 2025 to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. The commemorative ceremony was held on November 15, 2025, at the Sir Shankar Lal Concert Hall, University of Delhi (North Campus). It was a significant academic tribute to the tribal freedom fighter, solidifying the importance of Tribal Studies and the legacy of Birsa Munda. Professor Balaram Pani, Dean of Colleges, graced as the Chief Guest, and Padma Shree (Dr) Damayanti Beshra, Sahitya Akademi Awardee, as the Guest of Honour and Keynote Speaker,

The commemorative function commenced with Dr Avitoli G. Zhimo, Joint Director of the Centre for Tribal Studies and Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Delhi, welcoming the gathering and inviting the distinguished guests to participate in the lighting of the lamp and paying floral tributes to Bhagwan Birsa Munda. The proceedings continued with Professor Soumendra Mohan Patnaik, Director of the Centre for Tribal Studies and Head of the Department of Anthropology, delivering the welcome address, in which he officially introduced the esteemed guests and highlighted the profound historical and cultural significance of the day, including a narration of the life and legacy of the legendary Bhagwan Birsa Munda.

The Chief Guest Professor Balaram Pani, Dean of Colleges, delivered a compelling speech to the audience. In his address, Professor Pani used classic literary examples from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to inspire and motivate the youth. He urged them to cultivate qualities of consciousness and awareness, encouraging them to emulate the principled life and dedication of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. Furthermore, addressing the academic community, Professor Pani put forth a key suggestion that the Centre for Tribal Studies should expand its scope to include the study of “endangered languages of tribes” as a dedicated focus area within its mandate for linguistic studies.



The keynote address was delivered by the Guest of Honour, Padma Shree Dr Damayanti Beshra, who leveraged her extensive cultural and linguistic expertise. Dr Beshra provided a comprehensive overview of the rich heritage embedded in the Odia and Santhali languages, literature, culture, family values, traditional practices, and symbols of worship. She highlighted advanced social structures within tribal communities, such as their anti-dowry marriage systems, and asserted that a sophisticated Indian Knowledge System is deeply rooted in tribal knowledge. A central theme of her speech focused on the profound influence of tribal words and terms on modern cultural terminologies. However, she also raised a critical concern. Despite this deep-rooted knowledge and the presence of tribal political leaders in prominent positions, education remains a significant challenge, which consequently hampers the community's overall development. Dr Beshra concluded her powerful address by issuing a heartfelt appeal to the youth, urging them to respect and actively utilise their tribal language and mother tongue as a crucial step towards both individual and communal development and outreach.



The commemorative function concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Prof. RP Mitra, Professor of Anthropology.



The Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh event continued with two successive plenary sessions, during which distinguished thinkers and academicians spoke on topics ranging from the Constitution to cultural heritage. The first plenary session focused on 'Tribal Health and Public Policy'. The session was moderated by Dr Nidhi Balyan (Lakshmibai College), who provided a brief introduction to the background and achievements of the invited speakers.



Prof. K. Ratnabali (Dean of Academic Affairs, DU) focused on “Indian Constitution and the Tribes.” Her address provided a foundational understanding of tribal identity, the unique relationship between tribes and their land, and the constitutional and statutory provisions designed for their protection and welfare. Prof. Ratnabali began by clarifying that the term ‘tribe’ is not homogeneous and has evolved. In India, tribes are also known as Adivasis (original inhabitants) or Vanvasi (forest dwellers). She emphasised that tribal communities are highly diverse and heterogeneous. While discussing the characteristics of tribes as given by Robert Goodland, geographical isolation or semi-isolation, partial acculturation, economic independence, ethnic distinctiveness, environmental dependence, leadership without national representation, and limited political rights, she emphasised the centrality of land. For tribes, land is the essence of their existence; the source of their science, technology, way of life, religion, and culture.



She explained that the Constitution of India recognises tribes under the administrative term “Scheduled Tribes” (Anusuchit Janjati), as specified in Article 342, which provides them with specific privileges and protections. She also elaborated on Scheduled Areas, declared by the President under Paragraph 6(1) of the Fifth Schedule, based on criteria such as a preponderance of tribal population, compactness, viable administrative units, and regional economic backwardness. Prof. Ratnabali outlined the constitutional protections, including the Preamble, Fundamental Rights (such as Article 19(1)(d) and (e)), the Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 39 and 46), and the Fifth and Sixth Schedules. She also referred to major legislations such as the Forest Rights Act and the RFCTLARR Act, 2013. She detailed the structure of the Fifth Schedule, including responsibilities of the Governor, Tribes Advisory Councils (TACs), and provisions related to the applicability of laws, modification of Scheduled Areas, and amendment procedures. She concluded with a brief note on Schedule VI, which grants greater autonomy to tribes in specific northeastern states under customary laws.



Prof. Gautam Kshatriya has examined the changing pattern of health indicators among Indian tribes, highlighting a concerning shift from traditional infectious diseases to a triple burden of under-nutrition, overweight/obesity, and hypertension. He noted that 39.5% of tribal populations remain underweight (NFHS-5, 2019-21), reflecting India's broader challenges as indicated by its Global Hunger Index ranking. At the same time, overweight/obesity and hypertension -especially among tribal women are rising sharply. He explained the Fetal Origin Hypothesis, linking poor fetal nutrition to adult hypertension due to early vascular programming. He identified the key drivers of these health transitions: urbanisation, processed food consumption, shrinking traditional food baskets, dependence on the PDS, and gender inequality in food access.



Prof. Anil Kumar (CEO of University of Delhi Foundation), in his presentation titled “Inclusion and Empowerment of Tribes in India: Issues and Opportunities,” stressed the need to integrate tribal populations into the national mainstream while safeguarding their unique cultural identity. He noted a rise in literacy among tribes due to focused government efforts, but cautioned that rapid mainstream integration poses a risk to traditional knowledge systems. With tribes comprising approximately 9% of India's population, he emphasised that their inclusion is crucial to national development. Prof. Kumar highlighted the need to shift from dependency on government jobs to entrepreneurship, and acknowledged the role of schemes like Jan Dhan Yojana and Mudra in fostering financial inclusion. Drawing on his fieldwork in Pithoragarh, he highlighted employment concerns and urged attention to proactive support from bodies such as the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). He concluded by calling for balanced development that leverages government schemes and promotes entrepreneurship, while ensuring that tribal cultural heritage remains protected and studied.



The second Plenary Session, titled ‘Tribal Lifeworld and Sustainable Development’, was moderated by Dr Santosh Hasnu (History, Hansraj College)



Prof. Nita Mathur, Director, School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, delivered a talk on “Tribal Language and Culture: Case of Santhals.” Drawing on her extensive engagement with the Santhal community, she established the premise that “Language and culture are constitutive of each other. She discussed how globalisation and consumerism have reshaped cultural environments, noting the growing presence of digital content in tribal languages. She highlighted Santhali cultural promoters such as Ananta Kisku and fashion designer Lipsa Hembram, who are bringing Santhal identity into the mainstream. She concluded by emphasising practical preservation strategies, suggesting that the consistent use of tribal languages across forums such as magazines, markets, and community meetings is essential. According to Prof. Mathur, preserving the language through these means will inherently safeguard the tribal culture, thus reaffirming her initial assertion regarding the inseparable link between language and culture.



Dr Jyotirmayee Tudu, Associate Professor at the Centre for Political Studies, JNU, spoke on The Citizens of Environment: Some Reflections on Tribal Communities in India. She began with a call to support tribal communities in restoring Janjati glory. Dr Tudu revisited the constitutional recognition of tribes as equal citizens and traced their historical identity as “ecological communities.” She emphasised the deep environmental ethics embodied in tribal traditions, citing Ramachandra Guha’s Speaking with Nature. She illustrated this with examples such as the Halma tradition of the Bhils, the paddy preservation work of Kamla Pujari, and Chami Murmu’s remarkable transformation of arid land into forest. Dr Tudu concluded by asserting that the ecological vision of tribes requires a scalable framework, placing responsibility on Indian academia to develop it.



The final speaker, Dr Rahul Kumar, Deputy Director at the CCRT (Ministry of Culture), presented on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tribal Entrepreneurship. Dr Kumar outlined several government schemes aimed at recognising tribal communities as holders of cultural heritage. He emphasised the importance of dialects and described Tribal Heritage as “Living Knowledge,” referring to tribal communities as “Prakritiputra” (Sons of Nature). He stressed the need to translate cultural heritage into sustainable economic opportunities, arguing that tribal entrepreneurship today is driven by a pursuit of recognition rather than mere livelihood. Drawing from the Tribal Business Conclave 2025 and CCRT initiatives, he highlighted efforts to connect education with cultures. Dr Kumar concluded with the statement: “Intangible Cultural Heritage is the soul of India’s diversity, and tribal entrepreneurship is its heartbeat in motion.”



A panel discussion on the theme ‘Future of Tribal Studies in India’ was organised on 14th November 2025 at the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, to commemorate the Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh. The discussion was coordinated by Prof. RP Mitra, Professor of Anthropology.

The panel discussion on the theme “Future of Tribal Studies in India: Contents, Pedagogy and Interdisciplinarity” explored how tribal studies, once confined mainly to anthropology and colonial administrative perspectives, are now undergoing significant transformation. The discussion highlighted the need to recognise Indigenous agency, cultural diversity, and lived experiences, along with the incorporation of multiple disciplines, including history, geography, philosophy, environmental studies, linguistics, and education. This interdisciplinary approach is opening new possibilities for research and meaningful engagement.

A central question raised during the session was whether the field should be framed as “tribal studies” or as “learning from tribes,” positioning communities as active knowledge holders and creating a learning society. The discussion offered a forward-looking understanding of pedagogy and interdisciplinarity, illustrating how tribal studies in India can evolve into a more holistic, community-grounded and socially relevant discipline. This introduction set the foundation for the key insights and recommendations presented by the panellists.

The discussion was chaired by Prof. Bijayalaxmi Nanda, Professor in the Department of Political Science and currently the Principal of Miranda House. Her research interests include gender, political theory and human rights. She opened the session with the salutation “the divine in me bows to the divine in you,” emphasising the interconnectedness of all beings and the natural world. Prof. Nanda spoke about the ongoing process of decolonising tribal studies, the need to re-examine its methodological structures, and the importance of revisiting its pedagogy. She stressed the shift from outsider interpretations to centring tribal voices, correcting epistemic injustice and promoting plural, community-based knowledge systems.



Dr Ananya Barua, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Hindu College, brought a philosophical lens to the discussion. She emphasised a community-first epistemology in tribal studies and the need to prioritise collective knowledge. She integrated lived experiences and phenomenological perspectives with philosophical reflection to ensure ethical engagement. Drawing on her research experience among the Mizo communities in Shillong, she noted that teaching should not be limited to imparting knowledge, but should also cultivate empathy and understanding.

Prof. Deepshikha Aggarwal, a Professor of Legal Studies at IP University with a significant interest in medical anthropology and over 24 years of experience, drew the panel's attention to the legal aspects concerning tribal communities. She underscored the issues and challenges faced by tribes, noting that several policies in the legal domain remain unclear or inaccessible to them. She highlighted the need for empirical research models and methodologies, as well as the importance of introducing courses on tribal studies taught by sensitised educators. She also shared her experience working with the Munira community, noting their extensive knowledge of medicinal plants.

Dr Geetanjali, associated with the Cluster Innovation Centre and specialising in media and communication, introduced the idea of connecting tribal economies with modern industries. She presented her project on the forest economy in Hyderabad. She emphasised that meaningful tribal development requires stronger links between Indigenous economies and contemporary market systems, enabling communities to benefit from emerging opportunities. She noted that while forest rights empower tribal groups, challenges remain in their implementation. Drawing on her project in the Chota Bhangal region of Himachal Pradesh, she explained how technologies such as community-operated drones and GIS mapping have supported inclusive development.

Dr M. Kennedy Singh, Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Delhi, shared his understanding of tribal worlds and teaching experience. He engaged participants by posing key questions about tribal communities, including why they are studied, what practical and grassroots challenges they face, and what researchers in anthropology must prioritise. His questions encouraged active participation and enriched the discussion.

Dr D. V. Prasad emphasised the importance of chronology in understanding tribes and their individual agency. He noted that studying past and present contexts is crucial for shaping future insights in tribal studies. Discussing the chronology of anthropology, he shared his experiences in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, raising concerns about the use of generic terms for tribal communities and the resulting loss of distinct identities. He urged that it is time for restudies and for gathering new material to strengthen productive pedagogy.



Prof. B. W. Pandey reflected on the various terms used for tribal communities –Adivasi, Janjati and Vanvasi. He emphasised their similarities with other populations. He noted that tribal studies should be viewed as a form of tribal learning and shared his experience in Finland, where he observed the importance of tribal inclusion in climate-related decision-making and the recognition of their contributions. He highlighted his P.A.V.E. theory-perception, attitude, value and emotion, drawing attention to the importance of learning from tribal communities and their long-standing knowledge systems.

The crisp and insightful panel discussion concluded with remarks by Prof. Nanda, who summarised the key takeaways from the distinguished panellists and participating scholars. The exchanges of questions and reflections created opportunities to learn from diverse lived experiences. The discussion made it evident that tribal studies in India stand at a transformative moment, and shaping its future requires a multidisciplinary approach that integrates anthropology, history, sociology, geography, law and ecology to capture the dynamic realities of tribal communities. The session remained fruitful, offering new insights and approaches to both thematic concerns and pedagogy, and opening pathways for fresh perspectives in the field.

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CENTRE FOR TRIBAL STUDIES
Department of Anthropology

announces

Painting Competition

on the occasion of
Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh 2025
13 November 2025 | 2:00 PM

Themes

- Nature and Tribal Traditions
- Life and Heritage
- Pride of Tribal Culture

Guidelines

- The painting has to be prepared on the spot of the competition as per given themes.
- The paper for painting will be provided (Size: A3) at the spot of the competition.
- Participants need to bring their colours and other accessories.
- Each entry should have a title (4-5 words) and a brief introduction (20-30 words).
- Duration: 90 minutes | Venue: Department of Anthropology (North Campus)

Scan and Register for competition
Deadline for registration: 4:30 PM, 12 November 2025

director@cts.du.ac.in | cts.du.ac.in

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CENTRE FOR TRIBAL STUDIES
Department of Anthropology

announces

PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

on the occasion of
Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh 2025
13-15 November 2025

Themes

- Nature and Tribal Traditions
- Tribal Life and Heritage
- Pride of Tribal Culture

Guidelines

- The photography competition is open to bonafide students of University of Delhi.
- Photos must be your own original work.
- Submit images in JPEG format and ensure they are the highest possible resolution.
- Standard optimization is allowed but beyond this scope, digital alteration is not allowed.
- All entries must have accurate captions and descriptions, written in English.
- Select Photo entries will be exhibited on 14 & 15 November 2025 at Sir Shankar Lal Concert Hall.

Scan and Register for competition
Deadline for registration & Submission: 4:30 PM, 12 November 2025

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CENTRE FOR TRIBAL STUDIES
Department of Anthropology

cordially invites you to

Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh 2025

Commemorating the 150th Birth Anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda

15 November 2025 | 9:30 AM onwards
① Sir Shankar Lal Concert Hall

Plenary Sessions | Cultural Programme | Dance Competition
Painting & Photography Exhibition | Closing Ceremony

Registration is Free
Last Date for Registration : 12th November 2025

Registration is mandatory for participation

R.S.V.P

Prof. Soumendra M. Patnaik
Director, CTS
Head, Dept. of Anthropology
University of Delhi

Dr. Avitoll G Zhimo
Joint Director, CTS
Associate Professor
Dept. of Anthropology

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University of Delhi

CENTRE FOR TRIBAL STUDIES
Department of Anthropology

announces

Reel making competition

on the occasion of
Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh 2025
13-15 November 2025

Themes

- Nature and Tribal Traditions
- Tribal Life and Heritage
- Pride of Tribal Culture

Guidelines

- The reel competition is open to students of University of Delhi.
- The reel should be an original content with not more than one minute.
- Video files must be uploaded in mov or mp4 and have high-quality compression.
- Video files must be uploaded directly to google drive and send the link in the submission form.
- Regional language audio may include English subtitles.

Scan and Register for Competition
Deadline for registration & Submission: 4:30 PM, 12 November 2025

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University of Delhi

CENTRE FOR TRIBAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

announces

TRIBAL DANCE COMPETITION

on the occasion of
JANJATIYA GAURAV
VARSH 2025
15 NOVEMBER 2025

THHHS
Nature and Tribal Traditions
Life and Heritage
Pride of Tribal Culture

Guidelines for Tribal Dance Competition

- Group or Solo dance preferably of a tribe.
- It could be a fusion of various dance forms of tribes in India.
- The dancers need to be from the same college/department/centre.
- Performance time could be for 5-7 minutes.
- The dance competition will be held at 4:00 PM on 15 Nov. 2025 at Sir Shankar Lal Concert Hall, North Campus

Scan and Register for competition
Deadline for registration: 4:30 PM, 12 November 2025

Inter-collegiate competitions on the themes of Tribal Life and heritage, Pride of tribal culture, were organised. Many enthusiastic students and scholars from DU colleges and departments participated in Painting, Photography, Reel and Tribal/folk dance competitions. The painting competition was scheduled on 13th November 2025 at the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi. Paintings and Photography of the select entries were exhibited at the following two-day events. The winners of the competitions are as follows:

I Painting competition:

FIRST

Harish Oraon
Ramanujan College
B.A (hons) Political Science



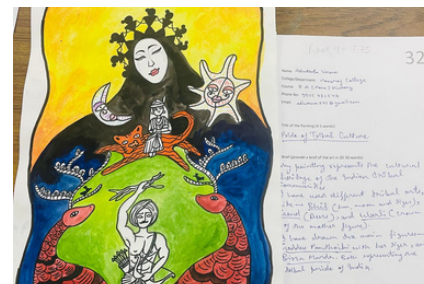
SECOND

Sneha Dauneria
Satyawati College
B.A (hons) History



THIRD

Ashutosh Verma
Hansraj College
B.A. (hons) History



II Photography Competition

FIRST

Ayira Tabassum
PhD scholar, Department of
Anthropology



SECOND

Meenal Soni
PhD Scholar, Department of
Anthropology



III. Reel Making Competition

FIRST

Skarma
BSc II Sem III
Hansraj College



IV Tribal Dance Competition

FIRST

Team Northeast Rhythmics
Indraprastha College for
Women, University of Delhi



