



# NALANDA LITERATURE FESTIVAL 2025

21 - 25 DECEMBER

## Post-Event Report of Nalanda Literature Festival'25 (Nalanda LittFest)

**A comprehensive post-event report detailing  
outcomes, learnings and suggestions for future.**

Venue:

Rajgir Convention Centre, Nalanda, Bihar, India



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# Composition of Committee (NLF'25)

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## Organizing Committee

- **Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh**  
Chairperson
  - **Dr. Adoor Gopalakrishnan**  
Eminent Writer
  - **Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi**  
Member Secretary, IGNCA
  - **Ms. D. Aaliya**  
Festival Chairperson
- 

- **Sh. Harshavardhan Neotia**
  - **Dr. Pankaj KP Shreyaskar**  
Festival Advisor
- 

## Executive Committee

- **Sh. Ganga Kumar**  
Festival Director
  - **Sh. Sanjay Kumar**  
Executive Director
  - **Sh. Vinod Anupam**
  - **Sh. Vinay Kumar**
  - **Sh. Rajiv Ranjan Dwivedi**
- 

- **Sh. Pankaj Dubey**  
Festival Curator

- **Sh. F. Azzam**  
Festival Coordinator

- **Smt. Aradhana Pradhan**  
Art Director



## Reawakening a Civilisational Knowledge Tradition

### **NALANDA LITERATURE FESTIVAL (Nalanda LittFest) 2025**

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# INTRODUCTION

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## *NALANDA: A LIGHTHOUSE OF LEARNING*



Nalanda is not just a city or a place on a map. It is a part of the universe, a galaxy where knowledge, culture, and ideas converge. Scholars, monks, and priests from across the world once came to Nalanda University and were mesmerized by its unique approach to, the depth of inquiry, scientific temper and the richness of exchange.

In an era marked by fragmentation of disciplines, identities, and narratives the need for integrated knowledge systems has become increasingly urgent. Nalanda's historic model offers an alternative: an ecosystem where science and spirituality, ethics and innovation, local traditions and global thought coexisted without hierarchy.

India today stands at a critical juncture. As it reasserts itself culturally and intellectually on the global stage, there is a growing recognition that soft power is sustained not only by economic strength but by ideas, values, and knowledge traditions. Nalanda, as both a historical symbol and a revived institutional presence, offers a powerful framework for this renewal.



# BACKGROUND





# RISE OF THE PHOENIX

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*ALLUDING TO A CITY FROM ANTIQUITY.*

The flames that consumed the great libraries of Nalanda extinguished not merely manuscripts, but a luminous chapter in the collective journey of human progress. The decline of Nalanda disrupted a vibrant culture of debate, inquiry, and scholarly exchange, from which the Indian subcontinent struggled to recover for centuries. Yet history reminds us of the enduring metaphor of the phoenix rising from the ashes symbolizing humanity's indomitable spirit of renewal. Today, Nalanda rises once more.

As a historic trailblazer in knowledge and civilisational dialogue, Nalanda once shaped global intellectual currents. Its revival carries the promise of setting new paradigms for discourse, knowledge-sharing, and the reaffirmation of civilizational ethos. Nalanda's moral authority was grounded in generosity and intellectual openness, spreading influence without conflict or coercion.

A BBC article dated 24 February 2023 reinforces the remarkable synthesis that defined Nalanda: the harmonious coexistence of religion and knowledge. In fifth-century Bihar, the Gupta rulers established Nalanda University nearly seven centuries before institutions such as Bologna and Oxford in the West. Nalanda was not confined to theological instruction; rather, it represented a rare and sophisticated fusion of science and spirituality an integrated model of learning that remains profoundly relevant today.

# NALANDA: A CONFLUENCE OF SCIENCE, SPIRITUALITY, AND CULTURES



When Nalanda was burnt down in the 12th century, some monks escaped with precious manuscripts to Tibet. These texts later shaped Tibetan Buddhism and influenced monasteries like Samye and Tashilhunpo. Centuries later, fragments of these manuscripts were rediscovered in Lhasa and the Dunhuang caves, proving Nalanda's far-reaching academic legacy. William Dalrymple has also described Nalanda as the “Harvard, Oxbridge, NASA of its day” all combined into one.

Nalanda excelled in medicine, logic, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, and philosophy, laying the foundation for the assimilation of knowledge with science. The Dalai Lama noted, “The source of all the [Buddhist] knowledge we have has come from Nalanda.”

According to records, the curriculum included studies ranging from the Vedas to Yogsastra and Cikitsavidyā. Monasteries even had twin ovens for medicinal preparations, highlighting a progressive approach to healthcare and monastic life.

The differentiation of races, nationalities, and backgrounds melted at Nalanda. Greeks, Japanese, Koreans, Tibetans, Chinese, Thai, and Sri Lankan students felt at home here. Nalanda disseminated structured Ayurvedic knowledge across India and contributed to early computing and mathematics the concept of zero as a digit being attributed to scholars like Aryabhata. From science to spirituality, religion to rigorous mathematical research, this UNESCO-protected site shaped global civilisation.

# NALANDA AS A LIVING CIVILISATION



Nalanda's destruction in the twelfth century was not merely the loss of a physical institution; it represented a rupture in a global knowledge network. Yet the transmission of Nalanda's texts to Tibet, China, and Southeast Asia ensured that its intellectual spirit endured. Monastic universities such as Samye and Tashilhunpo preserved Nalanda's pedagogical traditions, while scholars like Xuanzang and I-Tsing documented its cosmopolitan academic life.

Founded in the fifth century CE, Nalanda preceded Europe's earliest universities by centuries. Its curriculum encompassed medicine, astronomy, mathematics, logic, linguistics, metaphysics, and ethics.

Archaeological evidence points to advanced scientific practices, including medicinal laboratories and time-keeping instruments. Importantly, Nalanda embodied an integration of science and spirituality an approach increasingly relevant in contemporary debates on ethics, technology, and cultural sustainability.

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Nalanda represents humanity's earliest experiment in global education. The Nalanda Literature Festival (Nalanda LittFest) draws upon this inheritance, reimagining Nalanda not as a static monument but as a dynamic intellectual ecosystem where literature, dialogue, and ideas thrive.

# BIHAR AND THE NORTHEAST: SPARKLES OF CONNECTION



A BUDDHA STATUTE IN GHORA KATORA LAKE



KHASI HILLS - BEAUTIFUL LAND OF MEGHALAYA

Bihar and the Northeast, though separated geographically, share a philosophical unity: both preserve India's oldest cultural codes of simplicity, community, and continuity. The agrarian ethos of Bihar and the ecological consciousness of the Northeast reveal parallel narratives of evolution. Their music, crafts, and festivals celebrate life as a shared experience. Buddhism further strengthens this philosophical and religious connection, with Kamrupa historically serving as the entry point for the spread of Nalanda-influenced Buddhist traditions into the region.

Swargajyoti Gohain notes that H.E. Dalai Lama has frequently acknowledged the centrality of the Nalanda tradition to Tibetan Buddhism, introduced by scholars like Shantarakshita and Atisha Dipamkara in the eighth century. The lineage is evident across Himalayan Buddhist institutes and in the vision of Indian centres of Tibetan learning such as the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) at Sarnath. Today, the Northeast retains one of the highest concentrations of Buddhists in India, including 27.39% in Sikkim, 11.77% in Arunachal Pradesh, and 8.51% in Mizoram, underscoring the enduring influence of Nalanda's teachings.

# WHY NALANDA?

## Why the Nalanda Literature Festival (Nalanda LittFest)?

The location which we choose is Rajgir, Nalanda which enhances the experience. Its serene hills and dense greenery bring a sense of calm and make you notice the quiet messages of nature all around. When you walk into the venue, you can almost hear echoes of ancient learning. Step outside, and the fresh air, the hills, and the sacred ponds like Brahm Kund, Suraj Kund remind you of the natural elements and the connection between culture and science, literature and knowledge. It's easy to imagine the monks, priests, and scholars of Nalanda walking these same paths, analysing the fusion of nature, technology and the thoughts of life.

History shows that a paradise may be lost, only to be regained. The Nalanda Literature Festival (Nalanda LittFest) was conceptualised as a cultural and literary initiative aimed at reviving Nalanda's historic legacy as a global centre of learning, dialogue, and intellectual exchange. Rooted in the civilisational ethos of ancient Nalanda, the festival translated this enduring heritage into a contemporary platform for interdisciplinary engagement across literature, languages, history, artificial intelligence, robotics, philosophy, and cultural discourse.

The Nalanda Literature Festival (Nalanda LittFest) was therefore envisioned not simply as a literary gathering, but as a knowledge platform foregrounding interdisciplinary dialogue, linguistic plurality, regional voices, and youth participation, while engaging with contemporary global challenges such as artificial intelligence, migration, ecology, and cultural memory.

The Nalanda Literature Festival emerges as a vital expression of this heritage, bringing alive the ideals of peaceful coexistence, scientific temper, and the free exchange of knowledge.

Held from 21st to 25th December 2025 at the Rajgir Convention Centre, Nalanda the first edition brought together eminent writers, scholars, scientists, historians, and cultural practitioners from India and beyond. Distinguished participants included Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Shri Pavan K. Varma, Shri Arup Kumar Dutta, Dr. Vikram Sampath, Shri Amitabh Kant, Shri Devdutt Pattanaik, Shri Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Shri Abhay K, Shri K.K. Muhammed, Shri Akhilendra Mishra, Prof. Lakshmidhare Behera, Prof. Madhumita Barbora, international voices such as Dr. Sarita Boodhoo, Ms. Divya Mathur and scientific inputs like that Dr. Amit Kumar Pandey, President, Socients AI and Robotics, France, Dr. Ilaria Torre.



COLORFUL DECORATED FACADE IN BHUTANESE STYLE OF THE ROYAL BHUTANESE MONASTERY WITH COPY SPACE IN BODH GAYA, BIHAR, INDIA.

# VISION, KEY OBJECTIVES AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE



GIANT BUDDHA IN BODHGAYA IN BIHAR, INDIA

# VISION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



NALANDA UNIVERSITY RUIN, BIHAR

Nalanda has historically been a global centre of learning, attracting scholars from across Asia and nurturing traditions of debate, philosophical inquiry, and multicultural exchange. The Nalanda Literature Festival (Nalanda LittFest) was envisioned as a contemporary extension of this legacy a civilisational knowledge platform rather than a conventional literary gathering.

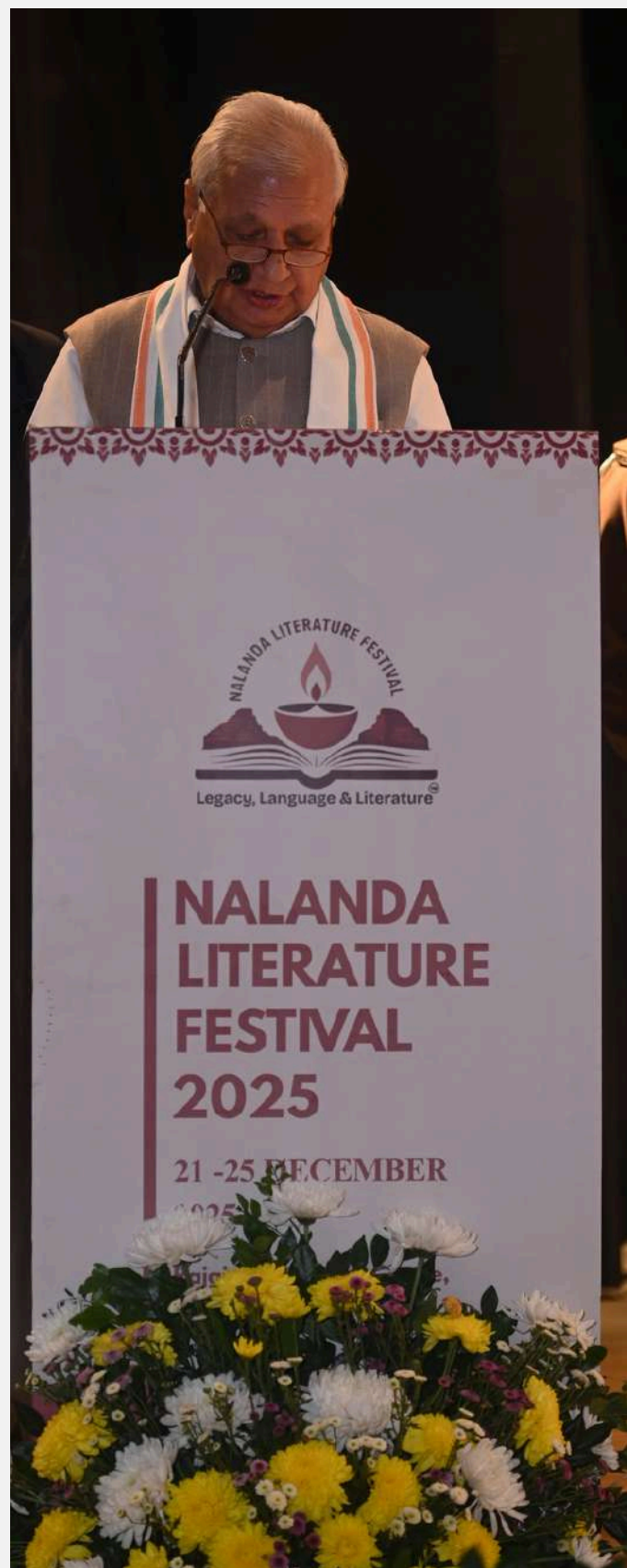
Its vision is rooted in re-establishing Nalanda as a living symbol of intellectual openness where ideas, narratives, and knowledge traditions intersect across geographies and generations.

The festival fosters meaningful dialogue between tradition and modernity, bridging classical and contemporary literary expressions, and positioning literature as a vital instrument for cultural continuity, social cohesion, and scientific and critical inquiry.

The 2025 edition, themed “States of Stories: Bihar & the Northeast,” highlighted literary traditions, oral histories, folk narratives, and contemporary writings of these regions, strengthening cultural bridges while foregrounding storytelling rooted in lived experiences and collective memory.

# KEY OBJECTIVES

- **Promote regional literature:** NLF promotes regional literature and culture of India with special focus of Bihar and North-east India.
- **Create a platform for movement of ideas:** NLF Creates platform for generation and movement of ideas with the aim to encourage youth, scholars, and first-time writers.
- **Develop library to preserve cultural legacy** for preservation and promotion of regional literature.
- **Connecting with the Indian Diaspora:** NLF strengthens cultural ties through the theme of “routes to roots.”
- **Bridge between Literature with art, modern science, medicine, environment:** NLF links literature with modern science, medicine, environment fostering innovation, research, and opportunities for young literary talents.
- **Permanent Centre:** Establish Nalanda as a hub for literary and cultural research.
- **Archival and Translation Initiatives:** Preserve and promote regional literature.
- **Respect for Languages and Traditions:** Revive classical and contemporary literary traditions of India.
- **National and Global Literary Exchange:** Promote regional, national, and international literary discourse.
- **Support for Folk and Future Writing Professions:** Create platforms for folk music and writing talent.



# HISTORICAL GRANDEUR



Nalanda evokes awe: over a thousand years ago, seekers of wisdom journeyed from China, Tibet, Korea, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, and Greece to study here. More than an institution, it was a civilization of thought, a temple of knowledge where philosophy, science, literature, and art flourished side by side.

Today, the Nalanda Literature Festival (Nalanda LittFest) revives that legacy, paying homage to the spirit of inquiry that once defined these sacred grounds. Writers, scholars, poets, and historians come together, echoing the same energy that once filled Nalanda's ancient courtyards. Each discussion continues a dialogue that began centuries ago.

To attend the festival means is to walk into a living history that extends its hand to the present and future. Nalanda was once the light of the ancient world, and through this festival, it shines again, reminding us that the pursuit of wisdom is eternal.



# CULTURAL CELEBRATION



India is a nation of stories, each carrying the fragrance of its soil. From the poetry of Vidyapati to the folk ballads of Bihar, from tribal chants of the Northeast to modern Hindi, Urdu, and English literature, the Nalanda Literature Festival celebrates this spectrum.

It is not just about books; it is about music, dance, storytelling, and oral traditions that have shaped generations. The festival ensures that heritage and creativity flow together, that communities see their culture honoured, and that the voices of ancestors merge with the dreams of tomorrow.

# POETIC AND EMOTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE



Some places transcend walls and time; Nalanda is one such place. Though its ancient libraries burned and monasteries fell, its spirit endured. The **Nalanda Literature Festival** testifies to that resilience where words rise like flames, defying darkness.

Here, stories are lived, poetry becomes music, debates become journeys of thought, and memories are reborn. Each session honors the endurance of knowledge, proving that while structures may crumble, wisdom persists. At Nalanda, these voices continue to rise, carrying hope, inspiration, and light into the future.

# YOUTHFUL & FORWARD-LOOKING



The heartbeat of the Nalanda Literature Festival lies in its youth. Students, young poets, digital storytellers, and innovators share the stage with established authors and thinkers, creating a dialogue that bridges generations and shapes the future of literature and creativity.

From conversations on artificial intelligence in storytelling to workshops on regional languages and dialect preservation, the festival thrives on curiosity and energy.

Heritage is not merely preserved it is transformed, connecting past wisdom with the tools, challenges, and opportunities of the present and future.

In this youthful enthusiasm, the festival's vision becomes tangible: to empower the next generation as creators of new narratives, ensuring that every young voice carries forward the legacy of knowledge, imagination, and cultural engagement.

# GLOBAL CONFLUENCE

Nalanda has always been more than a place; it has been a crossroads of humanity. Over a millennium ago, scholars journeyed from across Asia and beyond, making Nalanda one of the earliest truly global centres of learning. That spirit lives on in the Nalanda Literature Festival.

The festival brings together voices from India and abroad, bridging continents through literature. Eastern philosophies converse with Western traditions, oral storytelling resonates with digital innovation,

and local dialects find space alongside international works. Once again, Nalanda becomes a meeting point of cultures, demonstrating that knowledge transcends borders.

This confluence underlines the festival's strength: literature is universal. Just as Nalanda inspired the world in its prime, NLF reminds us that ideas, when shared, can reshape societies and transform humanity.

## PHILOSOPHICAL & REFLECTIVE

What is the purpose of literature? To entertain, to awaken, to record, or to question? The Nalanda Literature Festival explores these timeless questions. It is not only a gathering of writers and poets but a forum where philosophy, ethics, culture, and creativity intersect.

Here, the wisdom of the past meets the concerns of the present. Sessions on environment, technology, and identity sit alongside

explorations of spirituality, history, and art. The festival is a call to action, reminding us that literature is not only to be read but to be lived.

Nalanda was once the world's centre of debate, where thought was questioned and rebuilt. NLF continues this tradition, teaching that the pursuit of wisdom is about the courage to ask the right questions, not just finding answers.

## GRAND VISIONARY

The Nalanda Literature Festival is more than an event it is a vision unfolding. It revives the spirit of Nalanda as a living movement, bringing together writers, scholars, policymakers, artisans, and young readers to create a vibrant cultural ecosystem.

The festival extends beyond literature to include artisans, student initiatives, and dialogues linking tradition with technology,

heritage with innovation. It embraces artificial intelligence, digital preservation, translations, and linguistic research, building the past into the foundation for future creativity.

In Nalanda, every conversation, performance, and word spoken is an investment in tomorrow. NLF serves as a bridge between ancient light and future promise, between memory and vision.

# ROUTES TO ROOTS

A defining feature of Nalanda Literature Festival is its diaspora engagement initiative under the theme “Routes to Roots.” The festival reconnects the global Indian diaspora with their cultural heritage while fostering cross-cultural literary exchange. It celebrates historical migration, shared histories, traditions, and contemporary literary trends, creating a platform for dialogue that strengthens ties between India and its diaspora.

# LINKAGES BETWEEN LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

Nalanda Literature Festival bridges literature and modern science, providing a platform for innovation, research, and professional opportunities for young literary talents, integrating storytelling with technological and scientific inquiry.



# REGIONAL FOCUS: BIHAR–NORTHEAST KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR

Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 placed deliberate emphasis on Bihar and the Northeastern states, regions often underrepresented in mainstream cultural platforms. Sessions highlighted languages such as Bajjika, Magahi, Angika, Bhojpuri, Maithili, and tribal languages of the Northeast, recognizing them as living repositories of cultural memory, social history and identity.

Historically, Bihar and the Northeast were connected through networks of learning, pilgrimage, and philosophy, with Buddhism forming a key link. Ancient Kamarupa (Assam) maintained ties with Nalanda under King Bhaskar Varman’s patronage, as recorded in seals, inscriptions, and Xuanzang’s accounts. These historical connections reflect a vibrant Eastern Indian knowledge network, where ideas travelled freely across geography and language.

The festival reaffirmed this shared civilizational space, positioning literature and culture as instruments of regional integration and dialogue.

# PRE- MAIN EVENT ACTIVITIES



The pre-event phase of the Nalanda Literature Festival comprised a series of planning, outreach, and engagement activities undertaken prior to the final festival event. This phase focused on site finalisation, institutional coordination, stakeholder meetings, publicity initiatives, and national-level cultural outreach. The Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 began its pre-festival journey with high-profile meetings and outreach, laying the foundation for a grand celebration of literature and culture.

# DIGNITARY ENGAGEMENTS



# DIGNITARY ENGAGEMENTS

The festival team led by Festival Chairperson D. Aaliya, with the able guidance of Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Chairperson, Organising Committee, NLF began with key meetings, which are as below:

- An audience with Smt. Droupadi Murmu, Hon'ble President of India & Shri C P Radhakrishnan, Hon'ble Vice President of India marking the official endorsement of the festival.
- An audience with Shri Manohar Lal Khattar, Hon'ble Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, GoI & Sh. Harivansh Narayan Singh, Hon'ble Deputy Speaker, Rajya Sabha discussing support for cultural and literary initiatives.
- An audience with Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister of Culture & Tourism, GoI focusing on cultural outreach and festival engagement.
- A meeting with Dr. Shashi Tharoor and Sh. Amitabh Kant discussing the festival's vision and literary initiatives.
- An audience with Dr. Sukanta Majumdar, Hon'ble Minister of State, Education & M/o Development of North Eastern Region, GoI ; Shri S.P. Singh Baghel, Hon'ble Minister of State, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, GoI & exploring collaboration and promotion of literature.
- Engagement with H.E. Anil Sooklal, High Commissioner of South Africa to India, exploring opportunities for international collaboration.
- An audience with H.E. Mahishni Colonne, Ambassador of Srilanka to India emphasizing international and literary collaboration.
- Engagement with H.E. Lalatiana Accouche, Seychelles High Commissioner to India emphasizing cultural bonding and girmityas movement of Indian origin manpower.

These early meetings positioned the festival as a premier platform connecting literature, culture, and diplomacy.





# BHASHARATH INNOVATIVE OUTREACH INITIATIVE

Before the main press meets, the festival launched Bhasharath, a creative outreach initiative in July 2025. Starting from Delhi, the vehicle, covered with Nalanda Literature Festival posters and student collages, traveled more than 100 schools and colleges, including Rajgir, spreading awareness, inspiring young students, and engaging communities nationwide.

Festival Chairperson D. Aaliya highlighted the initiative's innovation and impact on youth engagement.



# RAJGIR, NALANDA, BIHAR

## *SITE VISIT AND ACADEMIC COLLABORATION*



The festival team visited Rajgir, Nalanda to finalize venues and logistics. Key meetings included:

- Festival Chairperson D. Aaliya; Festival Director Shri Ganga Kumar; Executive Director Shri Sanjay Kumar; Festival Curator Shri Pankaj Dubey; Festival Coordinator Sh. Faroghe Azzam along with more than 25 team members discussing festival planning.
- Interaction with Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, VC, Nalanda University and Prof. Siddharth Singh, VC, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara on institutional collaborations.

The full festival team captured a group photograph, symbolizing their unified vision.

# PATNA, BIHAR

## *INTERACTIVE SESSION AND PRESS MEET*

NLF organized interactive session and press meet on 26th July 2025 in Bihar Industry Association building, Industry House, Patna, Bihar to sensitise about cultural Festival “Nalanda Literature Festival – 2025” with the central theme i.e. Legacy, Language & Literature, to be held from 21-25th December 2025. Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Chairperson, Organising Committee, NLF joined for this meet. In this press meet, Ms. D. Aaliya, Festival Chairperson; Shri Ganga Kumar, Festival Director; Sh Pankaj Dubey, Festival Curator; Sh. Amit Pandey, international IT expert, Paris; Sh. Vinod Anupam, Head, PR Team; Sh. F. Azzam, Festival coordinator and several dignitaries participated to galvanise the language, literature and cultural legacy of India with special focus on Bihar and North Eastern states.



# CALICUT (KOZHIKODE), KERALA

## *INTERACTIVE SESSION AND PRESS MEET*

The festival team conducted a interactive session and press meet in Calicut (Kozhikode), Kerala in which Festival Chairperson D. Aaliya; Festival Director Shri Ganga Kumar elaborated the vision and necessity of NLF. Padma Shri K.K. Muhammed; Shri Snehil Kumar Singh, District Magistrate also highlighted regional engagement and support for such festival.



# PATNA, BIHAR

## *SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS' MEET*

In Patna, the festival hosted a Social Media Influencers' Meet to enhance digital outreach. Festival Director Shri Ganga Kumar and Festival Coordinator Shri Faroghe Azzam were joined with Shri Amit Lodha, writer; Sh. Vinay Kumar, Director, Babu Tower; Sh. RJ Shashi and Technical Team Head Shri Vineet Mishra. Numerous influencers and team members collaborated to amplify the festival's presence among youth audiences.



# MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA

## *FELICITATIONS AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS*

In Mumbai, the festival hosted a panel discussion and press meet in which several eminent personalities such as Shri Shatrughan Sinha; Padma Shri Kailash Kher; Shri Akhilendra Mishra; Shri Vineet Kumar; Shri Abhay Sinha; Shri Romy Jaffrey and many more were felicitated by Festival Chairperson D. Aaliya and Festival Director Shri Ganga Kumar. In this event, more than 100 media persons and culture activist participated and understood the vision and plan of action of NLF.



# GUWAHATI, ASSAM

## INTERACTIVE SESSION AND PRESS MEET

In Guwahati, Ms. D. Aaliya, Festival Chairperson and Padma Shri Arup Kumar Dutta led an interactive session and press meet. In this meet, Festival Director Shri Ganga Kumar emphasised the festival's regional engagement and community impact. Shri S K Medhi, Hon'ble Judge in Guwahati High Court; Sh Kalyan Chakraborty, Addl Chief Secretary (Art & Culture), Shri Rahul Das, Director, Govt of Assam; Padma Shri Arup Kumar Dutta; Prof. Madhumita Barbora along with more than 170 art lovers, writers and media person of NE states graced the occasion and understood about NLF.



# KOLKATA, WEST BENGAL

## PRESS MEET AND PANEL DISCUSSION

In Kolkata, Shri Harshavardhan Neotia, Festival Advisor, NLF; Ms. D. Aaliya, Festival Chairperson; Shri Ganga Kumar, Festival Director; Dr. Amar Mitra; Shri Satyabrata Dey; Ms. Rachita Dey; Dr. Prashant Kumar Ghosh and many distinguished guests conducted an interactive session and press meet, engaging media and audiences on the festival's programmes.



# DELHI

## CURTAIN RAISER

The Curtain Raiser in Delhi featured ceremonial lamp lighting led by Padma Vibhushan Dr. Karan Singh; Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Chairperson, Organising Committee, NLF; H.E. Vetsop Namgyel, Ambassador of Bhutan to India; Ms. D. Aaliya, Festival Chairperson; Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, VC, Nalanda University; Prof. Siddharth Singh, VC, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara; Sh. K. N. Shrivastava, Director, IIC. This programme was organized in association with India International Centre, New Delhi and Bharat ki Soch foundation.

The T-shirt reveal included Festival Director Shri Ganga Kumar, Festival Chairperson D. Aaliya, Dr. Sonal Mansingh, HE Vetsop Namgyel, Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Shri Sanjay Kumar, along with chief guest Dr. Karan Singh, holding the festival T-shirt together.



# RAJGIR

*Pre-Festival Press Meet (20th December 2025)*

The final pre-festival press meet in Rajgir, Nalanda featured Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh; Festival Chairperson Ms. D. Aaliya; Professor Shri Siddharth Singh, VC, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara; Festival Director Shri Ganga Kumar; Dr. Sarita Boodhoo; Festival Curator Shri Pankaj Dubey; Festival Advisor Dr. Pankaj K.P. Shreyaskar and many more.



RJ Shashi interacted with Executive Director Shri Sanjay Kumar and Festival Chairperson D. Aaliya, while Dr. Sonal Mansingh responded to media questions along with Festival Chairperson D. Aaliya.



# WAY FORWARD FOR MAIN EVENT

It was vibrant meetings with all eminent dignitaries such as President of India; Vice-President of India; Governor of Bihar; Several Ministers of GoI; Dr. Karan Singh; Dr. Sonal Mansingh; Dr. Shashi Tharoor; Sh. Amitabh Kant; Several Secretary to GoI; High Commissioners of South Africa, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and many more. It was also great interactive sessions at pre-festival engagements, with students, writers, influencers, and media personalities at different locations such as Rajgir, Patna, Calicut, Mumbai, Guwahati, Kolkata and Delhi, effectively set the stage for the grand Nalanda Literature Festival 2025.

Initiatives like Bhasarath, social media strategy sessions, press meets, panel discussions, and ceremonial events engaged communities and dignitaries, laying a strong foundation for a vibrant festival launch on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2025.



# PROGRESS REPORT

Over four days, the festival offered a thoughtfully curated programme of author interactions, panel discussions, poetry readings, scholarly dialogues, translation sessions, scientific inquiries, robotics, artificial intelligence, cultural performances, and yoga and meditation sessions. These activities fostered inclusive participation, engaging writers, scholars, students, cultural practitioners, and the public in meaningful exchanges.

Nalanda Literature Festival reinforced literature's role in nurturing critical thinking, empathy, and cultural understanding while strengthening Nalanda-Rajgir as a premier cultural and intellectual destination. The festival laid the foundation for its long-term goal of evolving into an annual, sustainable literary forum of national and international relevance.



# PLANNING AND PREPARATORY PROGRESS

The planning phase involved extensive conceptualization, stakeholder coordination, and institutional collaboration to ensure a nationally significant cultural event. The theme “States of Stories: Bihar & the Northeast of India” foregrounded regional narratives, linguistic diversity, and shared cultural histories.

Eminent speakers, authors, historians, philosophers, and cultural practitioners including Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Shri Devdutt Pattanaik, Dr. Vikram Sampath, Dr Amitabh Kant, Ms. Shovana Narayan, Sh. Purushottam Agrawal, Sh. Hrishikesh Sulabh were invited to contribute. Moderators and session chairs ensured informed, engaging

discussions across literature, history, science, AI, philosophy, mythology, and oral traditions.

A total of 93 volunteers from schools and colleges across country supported registration, session management, hospitality, and audience facilitation, gaining exposure to interdisciplinary cultural programming, public interaction, and event management.

A comprehensive media and outreach strategy ensured national and regional visibility across print, television, digital, and social media platforms.



# FESTIVAL IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

The inaugural day set the intellectual and cultural tone with opening addresses emphasizing Nalanda's historical significance and contemporary relevance. Subsequent days featured sessions spanning classical and contemporary literature, oral and indigenous storytelling, history, philosophy, mythology, translation, publishing, gendered narratives, and cultural memory.

Cultural performances including music, poetry, and traditional art forms immersed audiences in India's living storytelling traditions.

Active participation by scholars, students, cultural practitioners, and the public enriched the discourse and reinforced the festival's objective of accessible literary and cultural exchange.

Panel discussions, author conversations, and moderated sessions encouraged dialogue, critical reflection, and interdisciplinary engagement, with special attention to Bihar and the Northeast.



# DAY-WISE SESSION SUMMARY & OUTCOME

The Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 successfully reinforced Nalanda's historical identity as a centre of learning and dialogue. The festival contributed to cultural revival, academic engagement, and increased public interest in Indian knowledge systems.

It also strengthened Bihar and North Eastern's cultural visibility at the national level and laid a strong foundation for future editions of the festival.



# DAY I- INAUGURAL SESSION

## Speakers:

- Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan (Hon'ble Vice President of India)
- Shri Arif Mohammed Khan (Hon'ble Governor of Bihar)
- Dr. Shashi Tharoor (Hon'ble Member of Parliament)
- Padma Vibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh (Chairperson, Organising Committee, Nalanda Literature Festival)
- Shri Chanchal Kumar (Secretary, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, GoI)
- Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi (Vice-Chancellor, Nalanda University)
- Prof. Siddharth Singh (Vice-Chancellor, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara)
- Ms. D. Aaliya (Festival Chairperson, Nalanda Literature Festival)
- Shri Ganga Kumar (Festival Director, Nalanda Literature Festival)



## a) Session Context

The inaugural session lighted up the philosophical, cultural, and institutional foundation of the Nalanda Literature Festival 2025. It framed literature not merely as an academic or aesthetic pursuit but as a civilisational force rooted in India's ancient knowledge traditions based on science and reasoning, ethical responsibility, interdisciplinary inquiry, and societal transformation.

- Nalanda was presented as a living tradition, not a historical relic symbolising uninterrupted knowledge transmission, Lok Sangraha, and global scholarly exchange, sometimes at Nalanda and sometimes where the manuscripts from Nalanda survived be it Mangolia or Tibet.
- The session positioned India as a knowledge civilisation, offering a universal philosophy of coexistence, unity in diversity, and ethical humanism to a conflict-ridden world.
- Literature, art, science, and philosophy were articulated as interconnected domains, relevant to contemporary issues such as decolonisation & spread of knowledge, sustainability, employment, youth engagement, and global peace.

## b) Key Discussions & Insights

- Literature and new ideas provide intellectual vitality to society; without them, growth becomes stagnant. Society must remain “like a moving river”.
- Nalanda Literature Festival was envisioned as more than a literary event, a bridge between traditional literature and modern science, leading ultimately to employment generation.
- Ancient Nalanda offered a holistic curriculum including literature, philosophy, science, and medicine long before Western universities existed.

- Literature should be presented not only as history but as living science, relevant to the present and future.
- Nalanda symbolises collective sharing of knowledge, not material wealth.
- True teaching requires the unity of knowledge and conduct (vidya and ācaraṇa); mere instruction without ethical practice is inadequate.
- Nalanda embodied Lok Sangraha holding society together through generosity, non-miserliness, and ethical leadership.
- Fragmentation of knowledge is a colonial inheritance; ancient Indian knowledge systems integrated humanities, sciences, environment, and ethics seamlessly.
- Decolonisation of the mind requires rejecting compartmentalisation and restoring integrated thinking.
- Language was central to Nalanda's pluralism.
- Literature at Nalanda was lived through dialogue, debate, and immersion, not passive reading.
- Nalanda functioned as an intellectual agora where ideas were questioned, refined, preserved, and transmitted across Asia.
- India's literary strength lies in linguistic plurality, from Sanskrit and Santali to Maithili and Manipuri.
- Literary festivals democratise literature by taking it out of solitude and placing it in public conversation.
- Nalanda's legacy demonstrates that literature flourishes through interdisciplinary engagement with science, philosophy, and inquiry.
- Youth participation ensures the festival remains catalytic, not commemorative.

- The festival was redefined as a “Nalanda Samskritik Mahotsav”, encompassing literature, dance, music, and all art forms.
- Distinction between Gyan (acquired knowledge) and Vidya (internalised wisdom) was emphasised.
- Indian aesthetics through Navarasas were highlighted as essential for enriching human experience.
- Literature and art must reflect love, compassion, courage, wonder, and ultimately śānta (peace).
- Indian civilisation’s continuity rests on its unbroken knowledge tradition (Gyan Parampara).
- Indian philosophy transcends tolerance, advocating respect and acceptance of diversity, while realising intrinsic unity.
- ParāVidyā (supreme knowledge) leads to self-realisation where all beings are seen as extensions of oneself.
- The Indian worldview offers the world a universal vision: “Every human being is potentially divine.”

### c) Session Outcomes

- Established the Nalanda Literature Festival as a long-term civilisational and institutional initiative, not a one-time event.
- Reaffirmed Nalanda’s role as a global symbol of integrated knowledge, ethical inquiry, and cultural plurality.
- Positioned literature as a tool for intellectual growth, social harmony, youth empowerment, and global peace.
- Created a unifying philosophical framework for the festival by linking literature, science, art, ethics, and employment.
- Reinforced India’s responsibility to share its knowledge civilisation ethos

with the world through literature and cultural dialogue.

In the afternoon, the entire delegation visited the ruins of Nalanda University with the support of Archaeological Survey of India, Bihar. It was really mesmerising experience to visit such wonderful university. Needless to say, this is the first residential university of the world founded at Nalanda by the Emperor Kumaragupta in 427 CE and sustained by the conscientiousness of the learned monks and teachers, expanded for more than 800 years till the end in 12th century CE.

Thereafter, entire delegation visited the Xuanzang Memorial Campus of Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, which is a significant centre dedicated to commemorating the legacy of the eminent Chinese Buddhist monk-scholar Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang), who studied and taught at the ancient Nalanda Mahavihara in the 7th century CE. Set in the historic landscape of Nalanda, the campus symbolizes centuries of intellectual exchange between India and East Asia and reflects the shared heritage of Buddhist philosophy, learning, and cultural dialogue. Anchored by the Xuanzang Memorial Hall, the campus serves as a place of academic reflection, research, and cultural engagement, highlighting Nalanda’s role as a global hub of knowledge in ancient times and reinforcing Nava Nalanda Mahavihara’s mission to revive and sustain the Nalanda tradition of higher learning. In the evening, cultural programme was organised by entire team of Nava Nalanda Mahavihara under the able leadership of VC, Prof. Siddharth Singh.

# DAY 2

The second day of the Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 was a testament to the power of literature, languages, and culture, solidifying Rajgir's position as a hub of intellectual and artistic exchange. The day began with yoga and meditation sessions conducted by the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger.



- A key session featured Dr. Shashi Tharoor in conversation with Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, where Dr. Tharoor reflected on Nalanda's global academic legacy and candidly assessed the present challenges facing Indian higher education. He acknowledged institutions such as the IITs but cautioned against relying on isolated excellence, stressing the need to raise overall academic quality. Both of them highlighted the declining trend of Indian students abroad, supported the National Education Policy as a consultative reform, and emphasised critical thinking, academia-industry collaboration, and adaptability as essential skills for an AI-driven future.
- The session "Shabdon Ki Social Factory", facilitated by Dr. Amit Kumar Pandey, President, Socients AI and Robotics, France examined the intersection of language, society, and artificial intelligence. Speakers stressed that technology is not neutral and must be human-centric and culturally sensitive. Prof. Lakshmidhare Behera cautioned against AI's inability to capture lived human consciousness, while Ms. Aditi Maheshwari highlighted risks to linguistic diversity in the digital age, and Dr. Ilaria Torre raised ethical concerns about human-like robots and misplaced trust.
- Renowned filmmaker Padma Vibhushan Shri Adoor Gopalakrishnan, in conversation with Shri Ganga Kumar, reflected on the deep relationship between literature, theatre, and cinema, emphasising truth, depth, and integrity in filmmaking. He stated that cinema must go beyond entertainment to reflect lived realities and cultural consciousness.
- A book review session on How India Scaled Mt G20: The Inside Story of the G20 Presidency featured Shri Amitabh Kant in conversation with Prof. Sunaina Singh. Shri Kant shared insights into India's G20 leadership, attributing India's global rise to its demographic advantage, technological leapfrogging, and empowered youth.
- The festival also hosted the muhurat launch of the film Ardha Nayak, marking NLF 2025's engagement with contemporary cinema and storytelling rooted in social and cultural realities.
- The session "The Lost Love", moderated by Prof. M. J. Warsi, focused on the revival of Bihar's regional languages like Bajjika, Magahi, and Angika. Speakers discussed the cognitive and cultural importance of mother-tongue education, opportunities created by the National Education Policy 2020, and the role of technology and AI in strengthening indigenous languages as carriers of identity and knowledge.
- The session "Words to Screen", moderated by Shri Pankaj Dubey, explored the challenges of adapting literature and regional languages into cinema. Producer Abhay Sinha spoke on balancing creative honesty with market pressures, actor Sanjay Mishra highlighted language as the core of emotional expression, and poet Manoj Bhawuk addressed misconceptions around Bhojpuri. The discussion underlined that sensitive representation of regional languages enriches Indian cinema.
- Another notable session, "Writing India in English: Celebrating its Multicultural Narratives", moderated by Dr. Pankaj K. P. Shreyaskar, examined English as a medium for expressing India's diverse

realities. Author and IPS officer Amit Lodha shared how English enabled him to humanise policing through lived narratives, while historian Dr. Abhishek Anand stressed that English must complement, not replace India's multilingual heritage.

- The day concluded with a book review of *A Zigzag Mind*, featuring Dr. Sonal Mansingh in conversation with Dr. Vikram Sampath. Dr. Mansingh described the book as a reflection on creative curiosity, discipline, and Indian philosophy, highlighting the Guru-Shishya tradition and the relevance of mythology and classical arts in contemporary life.

The festival also showcased book reviews and book releases by Ms. Maya Parijat, Ms. Anju Ranjan and Sh. Anil Kariwala reflecting the breadth of contemporary literary discourse.

The evening concluded with, a cultural performance, blending classical and folk traditions, followed by dinner, highlighting NLF 2025's unique combination of intellectual engagement and artistic celebration.

## Key Outcomes

- **Reaffirmation of Nalanda's Global Legacy:** Discussions highlighted Nalanda as a symbol of India's historic intellectual leadership while underscoring the urgent need to strengthen the overall quality, inclusivity, and global appeal of Indian higher education in the present era.
- **Human-Centric Approach to AI and Technology:** Sessions stressed that artificial intelligence must remain ethically grounded, culturally sensitive, and human-focused, with strong caution against technological

dominance over lived human experience and linguistic diversity.

- **Revival and Empowerment of Indian Languages:** Strong emphasis was placed on protecting and promoting regional and mother-tongue languages such as Magahi, Bajjika, Angika, and Bhojpuri, recognising them as carriers of identity, cognition, and cultural memory supported by NEP 2020 and digital tools.
- **Literature as the Soul of Cinema and Storytelling:** Filmmakers and writers reinforced that cinema rooted in literature, truth, and cultural integrity can go beyond entertainment to reflect social realities and deepen collective consciousness.
- **Balanced Role of English in India's Narrative:** English was acknowledged as a powerful medium for global expression and storytelling, while firmly positioned as a complement not a replacement to India's multilingual and multicultural heritage.
- **India's Rising Global Confidence:** Insights from India's G20 presidency reflected growing national self-assurance driven by youth, technology, demographic strength, and collaborative leadership on the world stage.
- **Continuity of Indian Knowledge Traditions:** Reflections on classical arts, mythology, and the Guru-Shishya tradition reaffirmed the relevance of Indian philosophical and creative traditions in contemporary intellectual and cultural life.
- **Integration of Thought and Art.**

The day concluded by reinforcing NLF's distinctive ethos where serious intellectual discourse seamlessly intersects with cinema, literature, performance, and lived cultural expression.

# DAY 3

Day three of the Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 opened as a thoughtful confluence of mind, memory and meaning, where history, language, philosophy and cultural identity came alive through rich dialogue and reflection. Scholars, writers and audiences engaged deeply as the day unfolded, beginning with serene yoga and meditation sessions led by the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger an anchoring ritual that infused the festival space with quiet introspection.



- “Reimagining Bharatiya Itihas from an Indic Perspective,” moderated by Ms. Ami Ganatra and featuring historian Dr. Vikram Sampath. The session examined the urgent need to reinterpret Indian history through an indigenous Indic lens. Dr. Sampath emphasised that history plays a crucial role in shaping a civilisation’s self-understanding and cautioned that distorted narratives largely inherited from colonial and Marxist frameworks continue to influence historical discourse even decades after independence. He advocated for an approach rooted in India’s own civilisational values, lived traditions and indigenous sources, enabling history to be understood from within rather than through imposed interpretations.
- This intellectual exploration was complemented by “Her Words, Her World : Exploring Women's Voices in Indian Writing,” a session that highlighted the contribution and representation of women’s voices in Indian literature. It foregrounded the powerful role of women writers in shaping literary traditions across languages, regions and time periods, emphasising how their narratives enrich cultural discourse by bringing nuanced perspectives on identity, society and lived experience.
- Several sessions underscored language and knowledge as vital carriers of India’s cultural memory and civilisational ethos. In “Language as Legacy: How Regional Tongues Safeguard Our Cultural Roots,” Shri Ganga Kumar and Ms. Manisha Kulshreshtha highlighted India’s regional and indigenous languages as living archives that preserve collective identity, traditional knowledge systems and grassroots wisdom, emphasising that linguistic diversity is

essential for sustaining civilisational continuity. Complementing this, “Exploring the Nalanda Spirit in the World” reflected on Nalanda’s enduring legacy as a global centre of knowledge exchange and intellectual dialogue, illustrating how its spirit of curiosity, debate and cross-cultural learning continues to inspire educational and cultural thought across the world.

- Dialogues on inscriptions from the North Eastern states and reflections on Gandhian philosophy through the Champaran Satyagraha further enriched the historical discourse.

## ***The afternoon sessions brought the spotlight on India’s linguistic diversity, particularly from the North East***

- Discussions on “the languages of the Seven Sisters”, the significance of tribal languages and evolving practices in literary translation from Indian languages to English and vice versa.
- Conversations on “Urdu: From Past to Present” traced the language’s rich historical journey and its evolving contemporary relevance, highlighting its role as a bridge between cultures, poetry and shared traditions.
- The session “Oral Literature,” moderated by Ms. Vandana Rag and led by renowned mythologist Sh. Devdutt Pattanaik, delved into the enduring power of storytelling as a cornerstone of human identity and culture. Sh. Pattanaik emphasized that stories are far more than mere narratives they are

living rituals that transmit values, beliefs and social structures across generations. Drawing on examples from the Ramayana as well as global mythological traditions, he illustrated how stories evolve with time, geography and society, continually offering new meanings to each generation. He introduced the concept of “belief-based truth,” showing how communities define ownership, identity, and authority through narratives rather than by nature. Highlighting that civilizations are shaped more by stories than by facts alone, Sh. Pattanaik demonstrated how myths encapsulate ecology, history and social realities, reaffirming oral traditions as dynamic, living forces that continue to shape cultures and collective consciousness worldwide. Through heartfelt conversations and shared reflections, he exhibited that Nalanda once again revealed itself as a timeless space where memory deepens into meaning and knowledge flows seamlessly from one generation to the next.

- The session “Exploring the Nalanda Spirit in the World,” moderated by Prof. Siddharth Singh, brought together Padma Shri awardee and eminent dancer-scholar Ms. Shovana Narayan and celebrated actor Shri Akhilendra Mishra to reflect on Nalanda’s enduring legacy of dialogue, learning and coexistence. Mrs. Narayan & Prof. Singh highlighted that the essence of Nalanda lies in embracing plurality, sensitivity and mutual respect, using examples from music, dance and literature to show how a single word, note or gesture can carry multiple layers of meaning. Shri Mishra explored the richness of Indian philosophical and linguistic traditions, explaining concepts like the Maheshwar Sutras and demonstrating how language, science and spirituality

intertwine within Indian knowledge systems. They reaffirmed Nalanda’s relevance as a timeless philosophy, offering guidance for a world striving for dialogue, diversity and deeper self-awareness.

- The historical exploration continued with “Inscriptions of the North-Eastern States,” moderated by Dr. Z. D. Lalmangaihzauva, featuring Dr. Madhumita Barbora and Padma Shri Arup Kumar Dutta. The session shed light on inscriptions as invaluable windows into the past, revealing the political, administrative, religious and linguistic evolution of North-Eastern India, with a particular focus on Assam and underscoring their role in preserving the region’s rich cultural and historical heritage. Dr. Barbora explained how inscriptions from dynasties such as Kamarupa, Salasthambha, Chutiya and Ahom reveal land systems, governance structures and the spread of religious traditions, while also tracing the evolution of scripts and languages. Sh. Dutta emphasized inscriptions as key to understanding the layered development of the Assamese language and identity, noting the influence of Vaishnavite reformers like Srimanta Sankardeva. He also stressed the urgent need to preserve endangered languages of the region, underscoring inscriptions, literature and oral traditions as pillars of cultural memory.
- Eminent Gandhian speaker and writer Shri Purushuttam Agarwal spoke on “Satyagrah: Champaran Prayog” which was moderated by eminent Gandhian thinker Sh. Bhairav Lal Das. While narrating these speakers, it was highly emphasised on morality of Gandhi’s way of life, which was undertaken by him during Champaran days.

## Key Outcomes

- **Reclaiming Indian History through an Indic Lens:** The sessions strongly emphasised the need to reinterpret Bharatiya Itihas from indigenous civilisational perspectives, challenging colonial and externally imposed narratives and restoring historical self-awareness rooted in lived traditions and native sources.
- **Language as Civilisational Memory:** Regional, tribal and indigenous languages especially from the North-East were recognised as living repositories of cultural knowledge, identity and wisdom, underscoring the urgency of their preservation through education, documentation and translation.
- **Revival of Oral Traditions and Storytelling:** Oral literature was reaffirmed as a dynamic force shaping societies, values and belief systems, highlighting stories and myths as living rituals that transmit culture across generations beyond written history.
- **Women's Voices in Literary Discourse:** The importance of women writers and narratives in enriching India's literary and cultural landscape was foregrounded, recognising their role in offering deeper, more inclusive perspectives on society and identity.
- **Nalanda as a Timeless Global Philosophy:** Nalanda emerged not merely as a historical institution but as an enduring idea symbolising dialogue, plurality, coexistence and cross-cultural knowledge exchange relevant to contemporary global challenges.
- **Inscriptions as Gateways to History:** Inscriptions from North-Eastern part of India were highlighted as crucial historical sources that illuminate governance, language evolution, religious traditions and regional

identity, reinforcing the need for their preservation.

- **Integration of Language, Philosophy, and Knowledge Systems:** Discussions revealed the interconnectedness of Indian linguistics, philosophy, science, and spirituality, affirming India's holistic knowledge traditions as vital for cultural continuity and self-understanding.
- **Continuity Between Past and Present:** The day reinforced that heritage, language and indigenous knowledge are living, evolving processes not static relics continuing to shape modern cultural consciousness and collective identity.



# DAY 4

The concluding day of the Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 unfolded in a reflective and intellectually rich atmosphere, beginning with a solemn tribute to eminent Hindi writer and Jnanpith Awardee Shri Vinod Kumar Shukla, who passed away on Tuesday, 23 December 2025, at the age of 88.

Speakers, writers and participants across sessions remembered him as one of the most original voices of modern Hindi literature and a master of restraint whose minimalist yet deeply evocative writing transformed ordinary life into profound literary experience. The tribute acknowledged his enduring contribution to Indian letters and the lasting influence of his work on generations of writers and readers alike.



Throughout the day, the festival reaffirmed its central vision of engaging with knowledge systems rooted in tradition while remaining responsive to contemporary realities. Sessions explored Nalanda's enduring global legacy, India's manuscript traditions, Gandhian philosophy in folk culture and the heritage of Indian scripts, highlighting Nalanda's historical role as a beacon of intellectual exchange.

At the same time, the programme reflected the festival's commitment to contemporary discourse. Conversations on transgender representation in modern literature, the cultural legacy of the Indian diaspora with special reference to the Girmitiya community and evolving narratives of identity beyond borders underscored the festival's inclusive and forward-looking ethos. Lively discussions on Bihar's culinary traditions, poetry, and regional arts added a celebratory and sensory dimension to the closing day, blending scholarship with cultural warmth.

- The session "Manuscript Traditions" offered serious and intellectual dialogue between Pamda shri K K Muhammed, Sh. Pavan K Varma and moderated by Dr. Shiva Kumar Mishra. Addressing a session on manuscripts traditions, archaeologist Padma shri K.K. Muhammed said that Bihar has a wonderful collection of rare manuscripts which need proper maintenance and research. Cultural thinker and writer Shri Pavan k. Varma said that manuscripts are the cultural heritage of Bihar and for its preservation and promotion, a detailed project should be prepared by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India to survey, digitize and translate them. Moderating the session, museum

expert Dr. Shiva Kumar Mishra explained that government and non-government institutions in Bihar have collections of rare manuscripts. Along with the Hindi translation and publication of rare Tibetan manuscripts brought from Tibet by Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan, there is a need to preserve and digitize the rare registers of Mithila and the rare collections of Darbhanga Sanskrit University and Mithila Research Institute, and to provide training in the study of manuscriptology.

- The session "Heritage of Scripts in India" offered a deeply engaging dialogue between renowned scholars like Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Sh. K K Muhammed, Prof D. Venkat Rao and moderated by Dr. Anantashutosh Dwivedi. Their conversation examined Indian cultural heritage, linguistic continuity and the role of the Indian diaspora in preserving traditions abroad. Dr. Joshi reflected on how overseas Indian communities safeguard language, ritual and collective memory with remarkable devotion, sharing poignant observations from the Aapravasi Ghat Museum in Mauritius. Prof. D. Venkat Rao spoke about safeguarding oral traditions, strengthening Bhojpuri media initiatives and pursuing global recognition of diaspora culture through UNESCO-linked processes. Sh. K K Muhammed narrated the heritage of scripts of India that refers to the rich history and a wide range of writing systems prevalent in the Indian subcontinent over centuries.
- The session "Nalanda: A Window to the World", moderated by Ms. Millee Ashwarya, revisited Nalanda's intellectual legacy in a global context. Dr. Shashank Shekhar Sinha presented Nalanda not merely as a site of ruins. He drew attention to recent research

that reveals the vast scale and multidisciplinary character of the ancient university. He highlighted Nalanda's role in shaping Buddhist philosophy and collective scholarly traditions. Complementing this perspective, Shri Abhay K. emphasised that Nalanda's greatest strength lay in the ideas it generated that travelled across Asia and beyond. He noted that Nalanda's culture of inquiry, debate and openness positioned it among the world's earliest global knowledge networks, offering enduring lessons for contemporary academia.

- The session "From Charkha to Chaupal: Gandhi's Ideals and Their Echo in Bihar's Folk Traditions", moderated by Shri Vinay Kumar, featured Shri Arvind Mohan and Shri Pushyamitra, who explored Mahatma Gandhi's enduring influence on Bihar's folk traditions, village life, and political consciousness. Shri Arvind Mohan traced Gandhi's transformation into a mass leader through the Champaran Satyagraha, highlighting the chaupal as a space of dialogue and grassroots politics. He reflected on the symbolism of the charkha and khadi as instruments of ethical living and self-reliance. Shri Pushyamitra examined the economic dimensions of the charkha, linking it to resistance against colonial exploitation and the revival of indigenous industries. The session reaffirmed how Gandhian ideals continue to resonate in Bihar's social fabric, artisanal traditions, and moral imagination.
- The session "India & Indian Diaspora with special focus on Girmityas: Legend language and culture beyond boundaries" with Dr. Sarita Boodhoo, Ms. Divya Mathur, Prof. Ajay Dubey moderated by Shri Anirudh Sharma traced out the emotional and cultural bonding of the Indian Diaspora with its

roots and the strength they provide to India and its soft power. Dr. Boodhoo traced her personal journey from India to Mauritius and highlighted her pioneering efforts in revitalising Bhojpuri through the Mauritius Bhojpuri Institute. Ms. Divya Mathur and Prof. Ajay Dubey emphasised that "when language is lost, identity is lost," hence it is required to be protected and preserved at any cost.

- The sensitive and thought-provoking session "Beyond the Binary: Transgender Characters in Today's Literature", moderated by writer and poet Kiran Bhatt, featured renowned transgender writer and literary thinker Vijayarajamallika. In a powerful intervention, she appealed to the Government of India and state governments to recognise transgender, intersex, and LGBTQ+ writers within the mainstream literary framework. Highlighting the absence of queer authors from national and state-level literary awards, she argued that transgender literature documents lived realities of exclusion, resilience and dignity. Calling upon the Bihar government to initiate steps towards honouring such voices, she underscored that cultural recognition is a meaningful pathway towards inclusion and social justice.
- The session "Tales Beyond Chokha and Gamchha", moderated by Shri Ravishankar Upadhyay, presented Bihar's culinary traditions as an extension of its history, philosophy, and social values. Cultural commentator Shri Akhilendra Mishra described food as a carrier of memory and ethics, drawing from texts such as the Ramcharitmanas and Buddhist narratives. Citing staples like khichdi, kheer, sattu and seasonal rituals, he critiqued modern fast-food culture and advocated for traditional diets as

balanced and sustainable. He also highlighted GI-tagged products including makhana, tilkut, anarsa, and Silao khaja, stressing the importance of preserving Bihar's culinary heritage as an integral component of its cultural identity.

- The “Live Show on Veracities of Poem”, moderated by Shri Dinesh Mali, brought together Padma Shri Haldhar Nag, Shri Ashutosh Agnihotri and Dr. Ajit Pradhan in a vibrant celebration of Indian poetry. Through recitations and reflections, the speakers explored poetry's emotional power, its truth-bearing capacity and its continued relevance in a globalised world. Discussions on translation, linguistic diversity and the international presence of Indian poets reaffirmed poetry as a living and cross-cultural medium of expression.
- The reflective session “Journey of NLF and Its Motivational Facets”, moderated by Shri Sunit Tandon, featured Ms. D. Aaliya and Shri Sanjay Kumar, who traced the vision, evolution and future direction of the Nalanda Literature Festival. Ms. Aaliya explained the choice of the theme “Legacy, Language and Literature,” emphasising Nalanda's civilisational heritage and the centrality of mother tongues such as Angika, Bajjika and Magahi. Shri Sanjay Kumar highlighted the festival's inclusive approach, noting its sustained focus on Dalit, women's, tribal and transgender literature, alongside year-round national outreach through workshops and digital engagement. The session acknowledged the vital role of volunteers and outlined future plans to empower young writers and strengthen the festival's international presence.

Reflecting on the journey of the inaugural edition, Shri Ganga Kumar, Festival Director, observed:

“The inaugural Nalanda Literature Festival has been a deeply fulfilling journey that reaffirmed Nalanda's historic role as a meeting ground of ideas, cultures, and scientific advancement. Over four days, the festival brought together diverse voices and disciplines, creating meaningful conversations that honoured our past while engaging thoughtfully with the present and the future.”

The festival concluded with a Closing and Felicitation Ceremony, honouring speakers, facilitators, artists, and contributors whose dedication and vision shaped NLF 2025 into a landmark cultural initiative. The closing day thus brought the festival to a thoughtful and celebratory close, reaffirming Nalanda's timeless legacy as a space of dialogue, learning, and shared cultural imagination.

## Key Outcomes

### Honouring Literary Legacy

The tribute to Jnanpith Awardee Shri Vinod Kumar Shukla reaffirmed the festival's commitment to recognising literary excellence and preserving India's literary heritage. Apart from this, some of the key outcomes are as below:

- **Reaffirmation of Nalanda's Global Significance**

Academic sessions reinforced Nalanda's historic role as a centre of global learning and intercultural exchange, highlighting its continuing relevance in contemporary scholarship.

- **Integration of Tradition and Contemporary Discourse**

The programme effectively connected traditional knowledge systems with present-day academic and cultural discussions, strengthening the festival's core thematic framework.

- **Promotion of Inclusive Cultural Representation**

The session on transgender literature advanced dialogue on literary inclusion and institutional recognition of marginalised voices within mainstream literary platforms.

- **Strengthening of Diaspora and Heritage Linkages**

Discussions on diaspora heritage highlighted the role of overseas Indian communities in preserving language and cultural traditions, strengthening international cultural cooperation.

- **Promotion of Bihar's Cultural Heritage**

Sessions on culinary traditions, folk culture, and regional arts contributed to the documentation and promotion of Bihar's intangible cultural heritage and regional identity.

- **Reflection and Strategic Direction**

The institutional review session provided clarity on the festival's vision, inclusive approach, and future priorities, including youth engagement and international outreach.



# CULTURAL PROGRAMMING AND HOLISTIC EXPERIENCE

Reflecting Nalanda's holistic understanding of knowledge, NLF 2025 integrated cultural and wellness programming:

- Daily yoga and meditation sessions by the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger
- Classical and folk performances, including Jasn-e-Mehfil and a special presentation by Dr. Sonal Mansingh and team
- Explorations of culinary heritage, folk traditions, and regional arts

These elements created an immersive environment where intellectual inquiry, cultural expression, and personal reflection coexisted harmoniously.



# MEDIA COVERAGE AT A GLANCE

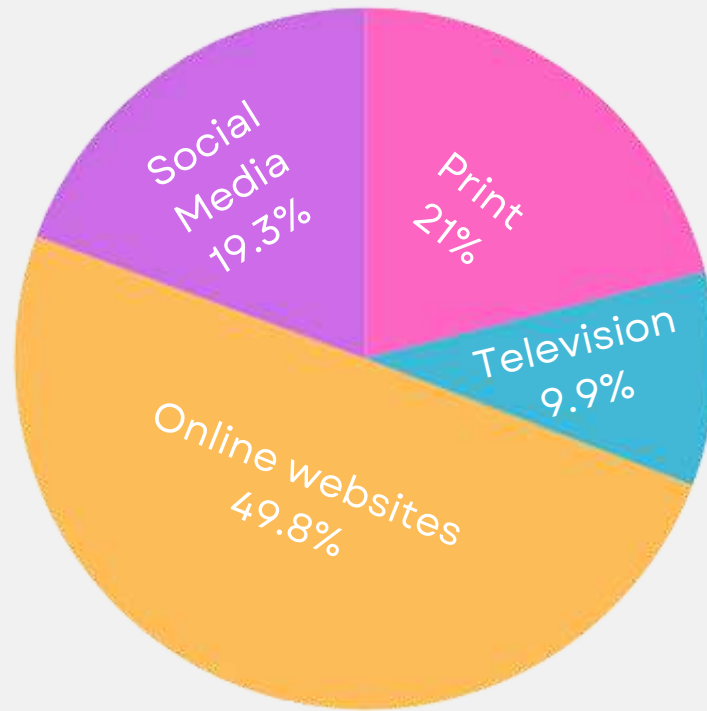
Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 received alongside regional media and digital extensive coverage across print, platforms. Television coverage included television, online, and social media DD News Bihar, News 18 Bihar Jharkhand, platforms, reflecting its cultural and Aaj Tak, CNBC Awaaz, NDTV, Times Now intellectual significance. Over 468 articles, Navbharat, Zee News Hindi, and News features, and broadcasts appeared in Nation, with All India Radio and multiple languages, including Hindi, Doordarshan amplifying reach. English, Marathi, Assamese, Bengali, Odia, Malayali and more.

Coverage included major national outlets such as Hindustan Times, The Indian Express, The New Indian Express, Economic Times, The Week, GQ India, Business Today, Conde Nast Traveller, and Lifestyle Asia,

Overall, comprehensive media coverage strengthened Nalanda’s visibility as a cultural and intellectual hub, highlighting the festival as a premier platform for literary and knowledge-based dialogue in India.

## Media Coverage at a Glance

Platform	% Share	Key Outlets
Print	21%	The Hindu, Times of India, Hindustan, Dainik Jagran
TV	9.90%	Doordarshan, NDTV, Zee News, ETV Bihar
Online	49.80%	The Wire, Scroll.in, News18, regional portals
Social Media	19.30%	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube



This highlights the dominance of online media and the strong presence of regional print coverage.

Timeline Graphic – Festival Media Flow

Pre-Festival: Announcements, teaser campaigns, author interviews

During Festival: Live coverage, panel highlights, social media trends

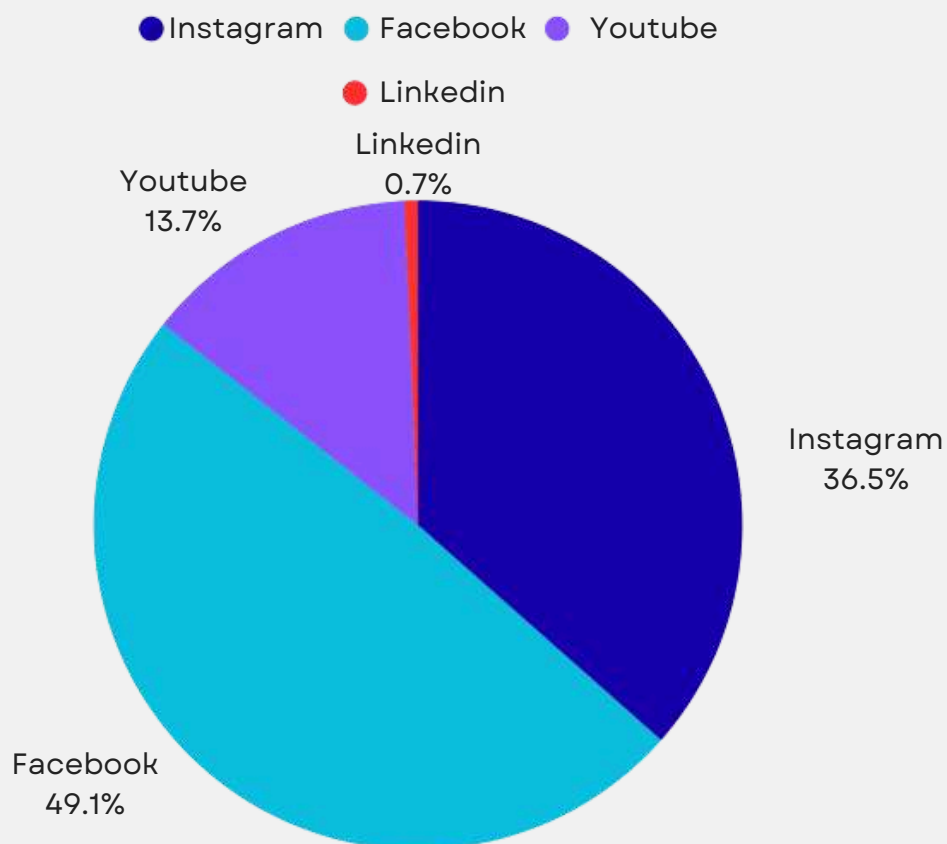
Post-Festival: Reviews, feature stories, photo essays, opinion pieces

Language	% Share	Notable Publications/Channels
Hindi	40%	Dainik Jagran, Hindustan, Amar Ujala
English	35%	The Hindu, Times of India, Scroll.in
Regional (Bhojpuri, Maithili, Magahi, Assamese, Bengali)	25%	Prabhat Khabar, Aaj, local channels

# SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH AT A GLANCE

Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 also received extensive coverage across social media platforms, reflecting its cultural and intellectual significance. As on 28.12.2025, more than 30M+ outreach at all social media platforms have been generated for this festival.

Social media played a vital role, sharing session updates, quotes, photographs, video clips, and performances to engage audiences in real time.



Overall, comprehensive social media outreach strengthened Nalanda's visibility as a cultural and intellectual hub, highlighting the festival as a premier platform for literary and knowledge-based dialogue in India. This emphasizes linguistic diversity and reach across multiple audiences.

# HIGHLIGHTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 emerged as a meaningful cultural and intellectual initiative that successfully revived Nalanda's historic legacy in a contemporary setting. Over four days, the festival created a vibrant platform for dialogue, learning, and cultural exchange, achieving several important milestones as outlined below.

- **Revival of Nalanda as a Living Centre of Learning**

The festival effectively reintroduced Nalanda as a contemporary space for intellectual and cultural engagement. By hosting high-quality literary and academic discussions, the festival reaffirmed Nalanda's identity as a historic seat of learning while presenting it as a living centre of ideas relevant to the present day.

- **Meaningful Connection between Heritage and Modern Thought**

NLF 2025 successfully connected ancient knowledge traditions with present-day concerns. Sessions on manuscripts, scripts, Buddhism, folk culture, and Gandhian thought were thoughtfully combined with discussions on artificial intelligence, robotics, identity, diaspora, gender, and contemporary literature, helping audiences to see heritage as a living and evolving resource.

- **Highlighting the contribution to the bond between Bihar and Northeast**

The cultural links between Bihar and NE and the similarities between cultures especially with respect to nature worship was highlighted.

- **Strong Promotion of Regional Languages and Local Culture**

One of the festival's key strengths was its emphasis on mother tongues and regional languages such as Angika, Magahi, Bhojpuri, Bajjika, Bodo and others. This focus encouraged pride in local languages and helped strengthen Bihar's cultural identity within the wider national literary landscape.

- **Inclusive Platform for Diverse Voices**

The festival created space for voices from diverse social backgrounds, including Dalit writers, women authors, tribal communities, and transgender writers. By doing so, NLF 2025 promoted a more inclusive literary culture and encouraged conversations on representation, dignity, and social equality.

- **Strengthening Links with the Indian Diaspora**

Through sessions on Girmitiya history and overseas Indian communities, the festival highlighted the important role of the diaspora in preserving language and traditions abroad. These discussions strengthened cultural ties with international communities and expanded Nalanda's reach beyond national boundaries.

- **Celebration and Preservation of Bihar and North East States' Cultural Heritage**

The festival gave special attention to Bihar and North East states' folk traditions, regional arts and culinary heritage. By highlighting traditional foods, crafts and GI-tagged products, the festival supported efforts to preserve intangible heritage and promote cultural tourism and local identity.

- **Participation of Eminent Scholars and Writers**

NLF 2025 brought together eminent scholars, writers, poets, historians, and cultural practitioners from across India and abroad. Their participation enhanced the academic quality of the festival and established it as a credible and respected platform for literary and cultural exchange.

- **Active Youth and Volunteer Involvement**

A large number of students and young volunteers from schools, colleges and institutions across Bihar took part in the festival. Their involvement contributed to skill development, leadership training, and long-term interest in literature and culture, while also strengthening institutional partnerships.

- **Wide Media Coverage and Public Outreach**

The festival received extensive coverage in print, digital, television, and social media platforms in multiple languages. This visibility helped reach a wider audience, increased public awareness, and positioned the Nalanda Literature Festival as an emerging cultural landmark for the state.

- **Strong Institutional Collaboration and enhance Organisational Capacity**

The successful organisation of the inaugural edition reflected effective coordination among government departments, universities, cultural institutions, and civil society partners. The festival established a strong organisational foundation and a practical model for future editions and year-round activities.

- **Clear Direction for Future Growth**

The festival generated valuable ideas and suggestions related to language preservation, inclusion, diaspora engagement, and youth participation. These discussions provided clear direction for strengthening future editions and expanding the festival's national and international presence.

# OUTCOMES AND KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Established way for NLF as a credible national cultural platform
- Repositioned Nalanda and Rajgir as contemporary intellectual hubs
- Amplified regional, vernacular, and marginalised voices
- Fostered dialogue between tradition and modernity
- Initiated national discourse on AI and storytelling
- Created a foundation for year-round cultural engagement

# KEY LEARNINGS

- **Curated Depth Outperforms Volume**

NLF 2025 demonstrated that audiences respond more meaningfully to fewer, well-curated sessions rather than an extensive schedule. Intellectual engagement, audience retention and speaker interaction were strongest in sessions with adequate time and focused themes.

- **Thematic Clarity**

Clearly articulated thematic anchors helped distinguish NLF from other literary festivals. Sessions rooted in Nalanda's civilisational legacy created stronger recall and coherence than generic literary programming.

- **Regional and indigenous narratives attract national attention when curated with seriousness**

Sessions centred on Bihar, the North East, and regional languages witnessed high engagement, affirming the importance of decentralised cultural representation.

- **Nalanda's Global Resonance is Underexplored**

Discussions referencing Nalanda's historical global influence generated strong interest, indicating potential for deeper international and diaspora-focused programming.

- **Youth engagement deepens through active participation, not passive attendance**

Emerging writers showed strong interest not just in visibility, but in institutional mentorship, validation, and publishing opportunities.

- **Community Building**

The festival's long-term impact lies in creating a continuing intellectual community, rather than being limited to an annual gathering.

- There is strong public and scholarly appetite for integrated, interdisciplinary knowledge
- Nalanda resonates most powerfully when presented as a living idea, not a historical relic
- Multilingual platforms enhance inclusivity and cultural depth
- Cultural programming strengthens intellectual retention and emotional engagement.

# STRATEGIC SUGGESTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

To ensure long-term impact, the following initiatives are proposed:

## I. Focussed Vision Strategy

- Institutionalising NLF as a year-round knowledge platform
- Launching Nalanda Global Dialogues across Asia, Africa and the Global South
- Deepening undivided Bihar–Northeast collaborations through residencies and exchanges
- Integrating cultural economy, publishing, cinema, and heritage tourism
- Dedicated programmes for young writers and translators
- Deeper integration of literature with education, technology and public policy

## II. Focused Programme Design

- Limit future editions to no more than 24 sessions across 3 days
- Ensure balanced scheduling to allow adequate time for dialogue, audience interaction, and reflection
- Prioritise quality, coherence, and intellectual depth over volume

## III. Thematic Anchors for Future Editions

Future programming may be structured around the following core themes:

- “Nalanda in the World” – Exploring Nalanda’s historical and contemporary global influence

- “Undivided Bihar and the North East” – Shared cultural histories, linguistic continuities, and knowledge traditions
- “Indian Diaspora” – Literature, memory, and identity across borders
- “Dharma and Nalanda” – To interlink various facets of Dharma and Nalanda.

## IV. Manuscript Contest and Emerging Writers Programme

- Introduce a Nalanda Manuscript Contest for unpublished writers
- Invite submissions across fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and translation
- Select 10 manuscripts annually through a transparent, peer-reviewed process
- Partner with reputed publishers to ensure publication and launch of selected manuscripts at subsequent NLF editions

This initiative will:

- Create a pipeline for new literary voices
- Strengthen NLF’s role as a talent incubator
- Foster a committed community of next-generation “NLFites”

## V. Dedicated Segment for Aspiring Writers

- Curated sessions featuring unpublished and emerging authors
- Mentorship interactions with established writers, editors, and publishers
- Workshops on craft, editing, and the publishing ecosystem

## VI. Long-Term Community and Institutional Development

- Establish an NLF Literary Collective for alumni writers and participants
- Year-round digital engagement through readings, discussions and masterclasses
- Documentation and archival publication of select festival outputs
- Establishing Nalanda Knowledge Archives and digital repositories Centre
- Creating a Nalanda Translation Fellowship
- Partnering with universities for internships, research and skill development.
- Digital archives and outreach initiatives

# CONCLUSION

## FROM FESTIVAL TO KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTION

The learnings from Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 indicate a clear opportunity to evolve NLF from an annual event into a sustained cultural and intellectual institution. By refining scale, strengthening thematic focus, and investing in emerging talent, NLF can build a self-renewing ecosystem that honours Nalanda's legacy while shaping the future of Indian and global literary discourse.

The Nalanda Literature Festival 2025 marked the reawakening of a civilisational impulse one rooted in curiosity, plurality, and ethical inquiry. By reclaiming Nalanda as a living space of ideas, the festival demonstrated that literature is not merely an artistic pursuit, but a force shaping social consciousness and collective futures.

With sustained institutional support and visionary curation, the Nalanda Literature Festival can evolve into a permanent global knowledge institution echoing the spirit of the ancient Mahavihara while addressing the intellectual challenges of the contemporary world.



**“Nalanda rises again not as memory reclaimed, but as dialogue renewed.”**

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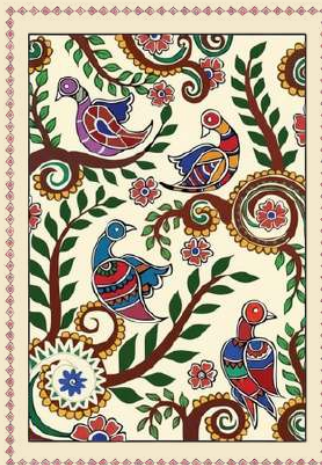
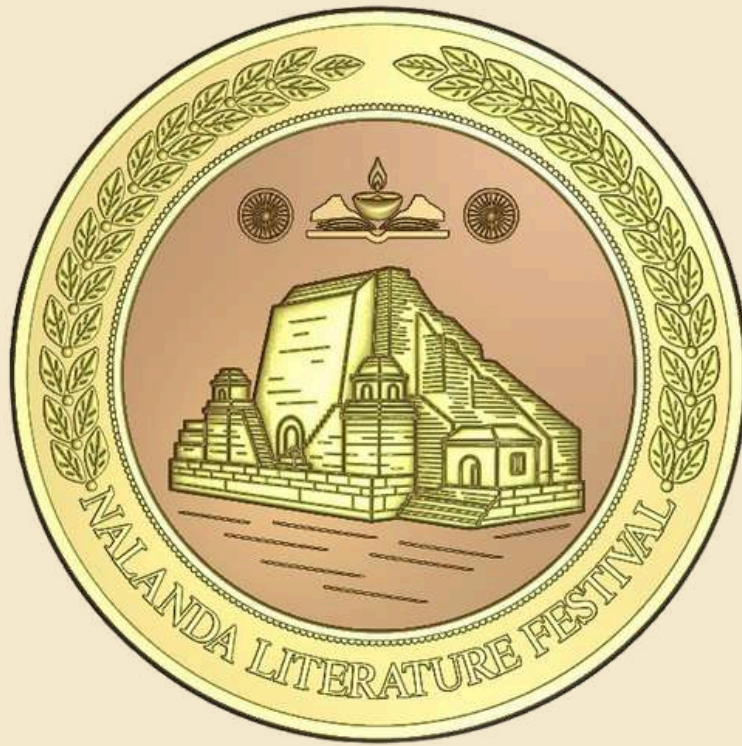


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