Kalidas Samman 2026 for Vani Tripathi Tikoo; 68th Samaroh in Ujjain

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News

The Madhya Pradesh Government's Culture Department has announced the National Kalidas Samman 2026 in the theatre (Rangkarma) category for theatre artiste Vani Tripathi Tikoo. The 68th Akhil Bharatiya Kalidas Samaroh is being held for seven days, from 21 to 27 November 2026, on the campus of the Kalidas Sanskrit Academy, Ujjain. Its opening ceremony was scheduled for 6 pm on 21 November, with Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav and Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat named to inaugurate it and the award to be presented there. The award carries ₹5 lakh, a citation, a shawl and a shriphal (coconut); Culture Director N.P. Namdev said the award has been given in this category since 1982 and that 37 personalities have been honoured with it so far (DNA India). The 66th edition was held in 2024 (News On AIR) and the 67th in 2025, so this year's is the 68th. Tikoo trained at the Living Theatre Academy of Drama and honed her acting under Ebrahim Alkazi. She worked as an actress and educator with the National School of Drama's (NSD) Theatre-in-Education (TIE) company, and played a key role in setting up the Madhya Pradesh School of Drama in Bhopal in 2011. The festival includes memorial lectures, Sanskrit plays, poetry sessions, a national research seminar and an all-India dance-drama competition. It is organised by the Kalidas Sanskrit Academy with Samrat Vikramaditya University.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Award	National Kalidas Samman 2026 – Theatre (Rangkarma)
Recipient	Vani Tripathi Tikoo, theatre artiste
Conferred by	Culture Department, Govt of Madhya Pradesh
Prize	₹5 lakh, citation, shawl, shriphal
Festival	68th Akhil Bharatiya Kalidas Samaroh
Dates, venue	21–27 Nov 2026; Kalidas Sanskrit Academy, Ujjain
Opening (scheduled)	21 Nov, 6 pm – CM Mohan Yadav, Union Minister G.S. Shekhawat
Award since	Theatre category since 1982; 37 personalities so far (reported)

Background

- Kalidasa: the greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist, placed by many scholars in the 4th–5th century CE; tradition makes him one of the 'nine gems' (Navaratnas) of a royal court at Ujjain. Plays: Abhijnanashakuntalam, Vikramorvashiyam, Malavikagnimitram. Epics: Raghuvamsha, Kumarasambhava; lyric: Meghaduta (a lover sends a message to his beloved through a cloud).
- Ujjain: an ancient city on the east bank of the Shipra (Kshipra), a tributary of the Chambal. As 'Ujjayini' it was the capital of the Avanti kingdom (6th–4th century BCE). It was held to lie on the 'first meridian' of ancient Indian geographers; Maharaja Jai Singh of Jaipur built an observatory (Jantar Mantar) here. It is one of the four sites of the Kumbh Mela (Simhastha), held every 12 years; the Mahakaleshwar temple is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas.
- History behind Malavikagnimitram: its hero Agnimitra was the second king of the Shunga dynasty (son of Pushyamitra Shunga). Pushyamitra founded the dynasty (c. 185 BCE) after killing Brihadratha, the last Mauryan emperor. The play is thus also treated as a literary source for the Shunga period.
- National School of Drama (NSD): set up in 1959 as a constituent unit of the Sangeet Natak Akademi; it became autonomous in 1975, registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and is fully funded by the Union Culture Ministry. Ebrahim Alkazi was its celebrated director. Its Theatre-in-Education (TIE) company (Sanskar Rang Toli), begun on 16 October 1989, focuses on children's theatre.

Tamil Nadu link: Like Ujjain's Mahakaleshwar, the Ramanathaswamy temple at Rameswaram (Ramanathapuram district) is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas – the only one in Tamil Nadu. Chennai's Bharatanatyam exponent Padma Subrahmanyam is also a recipient of the Madhya Pradesh Government's Kalidas Samman. Tamil Nadu honours artists in a similar way with the 'Kalaimamani' award.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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Akhil Bharatiya Kalidas Samaroh is being held for seven days, from 21 to 27 November 2026, on the campus of the Kalidas Sanskrit Academy, Ujjain.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Award: National Kalidas Samman 2026 – Theatre (Rangkarma); Recipient: Vani Tripathi Tikoo, theatre artiste; Conferred by: Culture Department, Govt of Madhya Pradesh; Prize: ₹5 lakh, citation, shawl, shriphal.

What is the background to this news?

Kalidasa: the greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist, placed by many scholars in the 4th–5th century CE; tradition makes him one of the 'nine gems' (Navaratnas) of a royal court at Ujjain.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Ujjain, the venue of the Kalidas Samaroh, stands on the banks of which river?

A) Narmada

B) Shipra

C) Chambal

D) Betwa

Answer: B – Explanation: Shipra (Kshipra) – a tributary of the Chambal. The Simhastha Kumbh Mela is held on its banks every 12 years.

2. Agnimitra, the hero of Kalidasa's play 'Malavikagnimitram', was a king of which dynasty?

A) Maurya

B) Satavahana

C) Shunga

D) Gupta

Answer: C – Explanation: The second Shunga king; his father Pushyamitra Shunga founded the dynasty after overthrowing Brihadratha, the last Mauryan.

3. Among the sixteen ancient Mahajanapadas, which one had Ujjayini as its capital?

A) Vatsa

B) Magadha

C) Kosala

D) Avanti

Answer: D – Explanation: Avanti. Vatsa's capital was Kaushambi, Kosala's Shravasti, Magadha's Rajagriha (later Pataliputra).

4. Ujjain's Mahakaleshwar is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas. Which is the only Jyotirlinga shrine in Tamil Nadu?

A) Rameswaram

B) Thanjavur

C) Chidambaram

D) Kanchipuram

Answer: A – Explanation: Ramanathaswamy temple, Rameswaram (Ramanathapuram district). Chidambaram and Kanchi's Ekambareswarar are Pancha Bhuta shrines.

5. The National School of Drama (NSD), where Vani Tripathi worked, was set up in 1959 as a unit of which body?

A) Lalit Kala Akademi

B) Sahitya Akademi

C) ICCR

D) Sangeet Natak Akademi

Answer: D – Explanation: Sangeet Natak Akademi; NSD became autonomous in 1975. Sahitya Akademi is for literature; Lalit Kala for visual arts.

Sources: DNA India, 20 Nov 2026 – dnaindia.com (award details, N.P. Namdev); News On AIR – newsonair.gov.in (Shekhawat to inaugurate 68th Samaroh); News On AIR, 12 Nov 2024 – newsonair.gov.in/vp-dhankhar-inaugurates-66th-all-india-kalidas-samaroh-in-ujjain (66th edition – numbering); MP Tourism – mptourism.com/kalidas-samaroh-ujjain.htm; Incredible India (Ministry of Tourism) – Sri Ramanathaswamy Temple; NSD – nsd.gov.in/delhi/?p=1102; NCERT and TN State Board History (Kalidasa, Avanti, Ujjain). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.