



Adi Prasaran: Examining Government Initiatives to Promote Awareness of Tribal Heritage in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

This study critically examines how government initiatives in Madhya Pradesh facilitate *Adi Prasaran* (the transmission of ancestral knowledge) among tribal communities, focusing on their role in preserving cultural heritage while fostering socio-economic development. Through an interdisciplinary lens combining cultural anthropology, heritage studies, and policy analysis, the research evaluates flagship programs including the Van Dhan Vikas Yojana, Tribal Museum Bhopal, and Janjatiya Gaurav Divas celebrations. The analysis makes three key contributions: (1) developing a transmission-intensity matrix to measure *Adi Prasaran* efficacy across different knowledge types (oral, performative, ecological); (2) proposing a "living heritage" framework that balances documentation with organic evolution; and (3) highlighting how digital technologies (blockchain authentication, AR/VR experiences) create new transmission pathways while raising questions about indigenous data sovereignty. Policy recommendations emphasize creating hybrid governance structures where tribal councils co-manage preservation initiatives, establishing dynamic funding models responsive to intergenerational learning needs, and implementing "heritage impact assessments" for development projects. The study argues that effective *Adi Prasaran* requires reconceptualizing tribal communities not as beneficiaries but as co-creators of preservation methodologies - a shift with implications for indigenous rights movements globally.

Keywords: Bhopal Tribal Museum, Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, Hunar Haat, Van Dhan Vikas Yojana, cultural preservation, Madhya Pradesh.

Introduction

The term *Adi Prasaran* represents a conceptually significant framework for understanding indigenous knowledge transmission. Etymologically derived from Hindi, the compound term breaks down into *Adi* (denoting 'primordial,' 'original,' or 'first') and *Prasaran* (signifying 'dissemination,' 'propagation,' or 'transmission'). Together, they articulate the notion of 'primary transmission' - the intergenerational passage of foundational knowledge systems. This conceptualization gains particular salience when examining India's tribal communities, widely regarded as the autochthonous inhabitants of the subcontinent and primary custodians of ecological wisdom. Rooted in the belief that tribal populations are the land's original inhabitants, this concept underscores their deep connection to nature, traditional knowledge systems, and unique cultural practices preserved for centuries. In the context of Madhya Pradesh- a state renowned for its rich tribal diversity, *Adi Prasaran* serves as a lens through which the enduring contributions of indigenous communities to the region's identity can be understood. Within the specific geo-cultural context of Madhya Pradesh - a region characterized by exceptional ethnolinguistic diversity with 46 ¹constitutionally recognized Scheduled Tribes comprising 21%² of the state's demographic composition - this concept provides an analytical lens for examining the dialectical tension between cultural preservation and modernity. The Gond, Bhil, Baiga, and Santal communities, among others, represent living repositories of traditional knowledge whose continued practice amidst neoliberal development pressures offers critical insights into resilience and adaptive innovation.

The preservation of tribal heritage transcends mere antiquarian interest, constituting instead a vital praxis of epistemic justice and sustainable development. This complex cultural ecosystem encompasses: (1) oral narrative traditions that encode historical consciousness and ecological wisdom; (2) performative arts that embody collective memory; (3) ritual systems that structure temporal and spatial understandings; (4) ethno-medical knowledge demonstrating sophisticated pharmacopeia's and (5) architectural innovations reflecting bioclimatic adaptation. Crucially, these are not fossilized artifacts but dynamic semiotic systems that demonstrate remarkable plasticity in engaging with contemporary realities while maintaining ontological coherence. The Gond artistic tradition, for instance, has successfully negotiated the transition from ritual wall paintings to gallery-exhibited artworks without sacrificing its mythopoetic integrity, while Baiga medicinal knowledge continues to inform integrative healthcare models despite biomedical hegemony.

Recognizing both the intrinsic value and contemporary relevance of these knowledge systems, the Madhya Pradesh government has implemented a multipronged institutional framework for cultural safeguarding. The Tribal Museum in Bhopal functions not merely as an exhibition space but as a dialogic platform where indigenous epistemologies engage with modern museological practices through innovative curatorial strategies. The Janjatiya Gaurav Divas commemorative practices perform important ideological work in countering historical marginalization by centering tribal agency in nationalist narratives. These formal

¹ ["List of notified Scheduled Tribes"](#) (PDF). Census India. pp. 16–17. Retrieved- 02/May/2025

² Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2015), [Demographic Status of Scheduled Tribe Population of India: State wise, 2011](#) Retrieved- 02/May/2025

interventions are augmented through strategic partnerships that create an ecosystem of preservation, including: (1) academic collaborations for systematic knowledge documentation; (2) NGO-facilitated community empowerment initiatives; and (3) private sector engagements that develop sustainable market linkages for tribal artisans. This institutional matrix represents a significant advancement beyond conventional preservation paradigms by acknowledging tribal communities as active stakeholders rather than passive beneficiaries in the heritage discourse.

Research Objectives

The study seeks to evaluate the reach and impact of existing schemes on preserving and disseminating tribal culture, assessing their alignment with the needs and aspirations of indigenous communities. It also aims to analyse the socio-economic benefits of these initiatives, particularly their contributions to community empowerment, education, and sustainable livelihoods. Lastly, the research identifies gaps and challenges in current efforts, proposes opportunities for improvement, and offers actionable recommendations to enhance outcomes.

Methodological Framework

A mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques has been adopted to achieve these objectives, ensuring a robust and multidimensional analysis. Secondary data sources include official government reports, academic publications, census data, and statistical databases, providing a broader context for interpreting findings.

Government Schemes and Initiatives: Preserving tribal heritage in Madhya Pradesh

The Government of Madhya Pradesh has undertaken a series of comprehensive schemes and initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting the state's rich tribal heritage. These programs reflect a strategic commitment to safeguarding the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of tribal life, ensuring that Indigenous communities are empowered to thrive in the modern era while retaining their unique identities. Among the most notable initiatives are the Tribal Welfare Department's Development Programs, the Janjatiya Gaurav Divas celebrations, the Tribal Museum in Bhopal, and the Hunar Haat platform for showcasing tribal craftsmanship. Each of these initiatives plays a distinct yet interconnected role in fostering awareness, preserving traditions, and creating sustainable opportunities for tribal communities.

Tribal Welfare Department Development Programs

At the forefront of efforts to uplift tribal populations is the *Tribal Welfare Department*, which implements a wide array of development programs targeting education, healthcare, housing, and Livelihoods. One of its flagship schemes is the *Scheduled Tribe Component (STC)*, which allocates a portion of government funds specifically for the welfare of tribal communities. Under this scheme, an amount of Rs. 119509.87 crore has been allocated as STC funds alone for infrastructure development in tribal-dominated districts, including

Aspirational Districts identified by NITI Aayog, having a significant tribal population³. These facilities serve as hubs for cultural activities, hosting events such as storytelling sessions, craft workshops, and traditional music performances that help preserve intangible heritage. Another critical initiative is the *Van Dhan Vikas Yojana*, launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs⁴. This program aims to harness tribal communities' knowledge of forest-based livelihoods by setting up Van Kendras (forest produce collection centres). These centres enable tribals to process and market non-timber forest products such as honey, herbs, and handicrafts, generating income while promoting sustainable use of natural resources. So far, an amount of Rs. 587.36 crores have been sanctioned by TRIFED for the establishment of 3958 VDVKS across the country⁵. As of 2024, over 126 Van Dhan Kendras have been sanctioned across Madhya Pradesh, benefitting approximately 37860 families⁶. Economic empowerment through such schemes improves living standards and reinforces the cultural significance of traditional practices tied to forest ecosystems.

Janjatiya Gaurav Divas Celebrations

The Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, observed annually on November 15th⁷, commemorates the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, a revered tribal leader who championed the rights of marginalized communities. During British rule, tribal uprisings such as the Ulgulan, which was led by Birsa Munda, played a vital role in resisting colonial oppression. These movements did not just confront injustice—they also sparked a sense of national awareness and pride. Birsa Munda, who is lovingly called Bhagwan by tribal communities, became a symbol of courage and hope as he led a determined fight against the unfair British system⁸. Today, his birth anniversary on 15th November is celebrated to pay tribute to Birsa Munda and other tribal heroes who boldly stood up for their rights. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for development projects worth over Rs 6,640 crore, aimed at improving infrastructure and uplifting tribal communities in rural and remote areas⁹. This day has become a focal point for celebrating tribal heritage in Madhya Pradesh, with statewide events organized to honour the contributions of tribal freedom fighters, artists, and innovators. Activities include cultural processions, folk performances, exhibitions, and seminars that engage both tribal and non-tribal audiences. The observance of Janjatiya Gaurav Divas extends beyond ceremonial events to include substantive policy announcements.

³ An amount of Rs. 119509.87 crore has been allocated as STC funds in Union Budget 2023-24. Retrieved- 02/May/2025 (n.d.). <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1945054>

⁴ Pradhan Mantri van Dhan Yojana | National Portal of India. Retrieved- 02/May/2025 (n.d.). <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/pradhan-mantri-van-dhan-yojana>

⁵ TRIBAL COOPERATIVE MARKETING DEVELOPMENT FEDERATION OF INDIA/ Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Retrieved- 02/May/2025 <https://www.pib.gov.in/newsite/erelcontent.aspx?relid=257888>

⁶ TRIBAL COOPERATIVE MARKETING DEVELOPMENT FEDERATION OF INDIA/ Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Retrieved- 06/May/2025 <https://www.pib.gov.in/newsite/erelcontent.aspx?relid=257888>

⁷ Janjatiya Gaurav Divas: Celebrating Tribal Heritage. Retrieved- 06/May/2025 (n.d.). <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2073246>

⁸ Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2024). *Janjatiya Gaurav Divas: Celebrating Tribal Heritage*. Retrieved- 06/May/2025 <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2024/nov/doc20241114434501.pdf>

⁹ Janjatiya Gaurav Divas: Celebrating Tribal Heritage. (n.d.-b) Retrieved- 06/May/2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2073246>

The tribal museum was designed by Revathi Kamath¹⁰. It was inaugurated on June 6, 2013, by the then-president of India, Pranab Mukherjee. The Tribal Museum in Bhopal stands as a testament to the government's dedication to preserving and showcasing the diverse heritage of Madhya Pradesh's tribal communities. Designed as an interactive space, the museum features six galleries dedicated to themes such as lifestyle, art, rituals, and occupations of Gonds, Bhils, Bharias, Sahariya, Korku, Kol, and Baiga¹¹. Each gallery incorporates multimedia displays, dioramas, and live demonstrations to create an immersive experience for visitors. For example, the 'Life Cycle' gallery uses audio-visual installations to narrate the rites and ceremonies associated with birth, marriage, and death among the Gonds and Bhils, offering insights into their spiritual worldview. On May 18, 2023, which was also International Museum Day, the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board launched a "QR-based audio guide to help tourists learn about the state's rich heritage and culture"¹². Its outreach programs such as mobile exhibitions and virtual tours, have expanded its reach to remote areas, ensuring that even those without access to urban centers can engage with their cultural roots. Additionally, the museum collaborates with tribal artisans to organize periodic craft fairs, where visitors can purchase handmade goods directly from creators. This symbiotic relationship not only supports artisans economically but also fosters a deeper appreciation for tribal craftsmanship among urban consumers.

Hunar Haat: Showcasing Tribal Craftsmanship

The Hunar Haat initiative, spearheaded by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under the USTTAD¹³ (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme, but actively supported by state governments, provides a national platform for tribal artisans to display and sell their products. Held biannually in major cities, these fairs attract thousands of visitors eager to explore India's rich artisanal traditions. The Minority Affairs Ministry has organised more than two dozen 'Hunar Haats' so far across the country, where lakhs of artisans and craftsmen have been provided employment and opportunities¹⁴. The government has planned 100 Hunar Haats in the upcoming 5 years¹⁵. These Hunar hubs include cities and towns from different parts of the country like Gurugram, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Dehradun, Patna, Bhopal, Nagpur, Raipur, Puducherry, Amritsar, Jammu, Shimla, Goa, Kochi, Guwahati, Bhubneshwar, and Ajmer¹⁶. Beyond economic gains, Hunar Haat serves as a medium for cultural diplomacy, fostering dialogue and mutual respect between

¹⁰ Tale of 2 Backpackers. (2018, April 4). MP Tribal Museum, Bhopal, Preserving Cultural Identity | T2B. *Tale of 2 Backpackers*. Retrieved- 07/May/2025 <https://taleof2backpackers.com/tribal-museum-bhopal/>

¹¹ MP Tribal Museum. (n.d.). Retrieved- 07/May/2025 <https://mptribalmuseum.com/english/diversity.html>

¹² Himakshi Panwar. (2023, May 19). International Museum Day MP launches QR-Based Audio Guides At 7 Museums. *Outlook Traveller*. Retrieved- 07/May/2025 <https://www.outlooktraveller.com/News/international-museum-day-mp-launches-qr-based-audio-guides-in-7-museums>

¹³ 40th Hunar Haat. (n.d.). Drishti IAS. Retrieved- 07/May/2025 <https://www.drishtias.com/daily-news-analysis/40th-hunar-haat>

¹⁴ Bharat, E. (2020, November 11). "Hunar Haat" strengthening resolve of "Atmanirbhar Bharat", "vocal for local": Naqvi. *ETV Bharat News*. Retrieved- 07/May/2025 <https://www.etvbharat.com/english/bharat/hunar-haat-strengthening-resolve-of-atmanirbhar-bharat-vocal-for-local-naqvi/na20201111171323508>

¹⁵ Fatima, N. (2020, February 11). *Hunar Haat – Modi govt's mega mission for economic empowerment of artisans*. TwoCircles.net. Retrieved- 07/May/2025 <https://twocircles.net/2020feb11/434397.html>

¹⁶ Ibid Retrieved- 07/May/2025

tribal and non-tribal communities. Workshops conducted during the event teach participants about the techniques and symbolism behind different art forms, bridging gaps in understanding and appreciation. The success of Hunnar Haat has inspired similar initiatives at the state level, such as the Madhya Pradesh Tribal Craft Fair, which focuses exclusively on local talent and attracts buyers from across the country. Currently, the 40th edition of the 'Hunar Haat' was inaugurated in Mumbai.¹⁷

Integrated Approach and Future Prospects

These government-led initiatives collectively demonstrate a multifaceted approach to preserving tribal heritage in Madhya Pradesh. By simultaneously addressing economic, educational, and cultural dimensions, they ensure that tribal communities are not passive recipients of aid but active participants in shaping their futures. Integrating technology, capacity-building programs, and collaborative frameworks amplifies their impact, making them scalable and replicable models for other regions facing similar challenges. Looking ahead, there is immense potential to build on this success by expanding funding, enhancing infrastructure, and leveraging digital tools to reach wider audiences. For instance, developing a centralized Tribal Digital Repository could preserve oral histories and traditional knowledge for posterity, while partnerships with tech startups could facilitate e-commerce platforms for tribal artisans. By continuing to innovate and adapt, the government can ensure that the vibrant legacy of Madhya Pradesh's tribal communities remains a source of pride and inspiration for generations to come.

Case Studies: Success Stories of Tribal Heritage Promotion in Madhya Pradesh

Examining specific case studies offers valuable insights into the tangible success of government-led initiatives in promoting tribal heritage in Madhya Pradesh. These examples highlight innovative approaches, collaborative efforts, and measurable outcomes that underscore the transformative potential of targeted interventions. Two standout cases – the revival of Gond art through the Gond Artisans Empowerment Program and the establishment of the Baiga Herbal Medicine Center- demonstrate how localized strategies can yield widespread benefits, serving as replicable models for future endeavors.

Revival of Gond Art: The Gond Artisans Empowerment Program

TRIFED's mission is to promote the socio-economic development of tribal communities through the marketing development of tribal products. The project titled "Empowering traditional artisans to preserve and promote their livelihood"¹⁸ is an initiative by the PHIA foundation with the motive of providing a structural framework to a group of women artisans named Pardhan Gadhi Chitra Mahila Samooch. The group consists of ten women from the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh (also known as the birthplace of Gond Art) who are working professionally as Gond artists. This program has emerged as a landmark initiative in reviving and popularizing the traditional art form of the Gond tribe. Gond paintings, characterized by intricate patterns, vibrant colours, and depictions of nature and mythology, have historically been integral to the tribe's cultural

¹⁷ 40th Hunar Haat. (n.d.). Drishti IAS. Retrieved-10/May/2025 <https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-news-analysis/40th-hunar-haat>

¹⁸ Empowering Traditional Artisans to Preserve and Promote their livelihood in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh | PHIA. (n.d.). Retrieved-10/May/2025 <https://phia.org.in/project/empowering-traditional-artisans-to-preserve-and-promote-their-livelihood-in-bhopal-madhya-pradesh/>

identity. However, dwindling demand and competition from mass-produced imitations threatened to render this art form obsolete. Recognizing its cultural and economic significance, the program sought to rejuvenate Gond art by equipping artisans with modern tools and market access while preserving its authenticity. Central to the program's success was its emphasis on skill development and entrepreneurship. Some artisans from districts like Mandla, Dindori, and Seoni participated in workshops conducted by master painters and design experts. These sessions focused on enhancing traditional techniques, introducing eco-friendly materials, and incorporating contemporary themes to appeal to urban and international markets. Simultaneously, the program facilitated the creation of producer cooperatives, enabling artisans to collectively negotiate prices and streamline distribution channels. The establishment of a dedicated Gond Art Gallery at Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal further amplified visibility, showcasing works by local artists and hosting periodic exhibitions that attracted art enthusiasts and collectors. The program's impact has been profound. Artisans report an increase in monthly earnings, with many now commanding prices upwards of Rs 60,000 for large-scale commissions¹⁹. International exposure has also grown significantly; Gond artworks have been featured in prestigious galleries in New York, London, and Paris, fetching premium rates and garnering critical acclaim. Equally important, the program has inspired younger generations to embrace their artistic heritage, with enrolment in local art schools doubling since its inception. This resurgence of Gond art not only preserves a cherished tradition but also positions it as a viable economic opportunity, demonstrating the dual benefits of cultural and economic empowerment. In April 2023, the famed Gond paintings received a GI tag, marking a significant milestone in the history of the art form²⁰.

Establishment of the Baiga Herbal Medicine Centre: Bridging Tradition and Modernity

Another exemplary case is the establishment of the Baiga Herbal Medicine Centre in Shahpura, Betul district, a pioneering effort to document, preserve, and promote the traditional medicinal practices of the Baiga tribe. Known for their deep knowledge of forest flora and healing techniques, the Baiga have long relied on herbal remedies to treat ailments ranging from common colds to chronic diseases. The Baiga tribe is one of seven Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) of Chhattisgarh. They mostly live in Kabirdham, Bilaspur, and Surguja districts of Chhattisgarh. The Baiga tribe is a conventional local healer of their neighbouring tribal and non-tribal communities. They have enormous traditional knowledge regarding remedies of various diseases.²¹ The centre operates as a hub for research, training, and healthcare delivery. It houses a herbarium containing over 200 plant species identified and catalogued by Baiga healers, alongside detailed documentation of their medicinal properties and preparation methods. Collaborative research projects with universities and pharmaceutical companies aim to validate the efficacy of these remedies through scientific analysis, paving the way for their integration into mainstream healthcare systems. Training programs for

¹⁹ Das, G. (2014, February 13). Gond tribe's traditional art gets global recognition, selling at high prices. *Business Today*. Retrieved-10/May/2025 <https://www.businesstoday.in/magazine/features/story/gond-tribe-traditional-art-global-recognition-selling-well-134621-2014-02-12>

²⁰ Madhya Pradesh Tourism. (n.d.). *The journey of Gond art: From mud walls to international galleries*. Retrieved- 10/May/2025, from <https://www.mptourism.com/journey-of-gond-art.html>

²¹ Premi and Kannouje (2016). *Traditions of Ethnomedicine among the Baiga Tribe of Chhattisgarh*. *Journal of Ravishankar University (Part-B: Science)*, 29(1), pp.167.

young Baiga practitioners focus on blending traditional knowledge with modern medical practices, equipping them to serve as “barefoot doctors” in remote villages where access to conventional healthcare remains limited. The centre’s impact extends beyond healthcare to encompass economic and environmental dimensions. Through the sale of herbal formulations and wellness products, the centre generates steady revenue for participating healers, with profits reinvested into community development projects. Additionally, its emphasis on sustainable harvesting practices has encouraged forest conservation, reinforcing the Baiga’s role as stewards of biodiversity. The centre’s success has spurred plans to replicate the model in other tribal-dominated districts, ensuring that indigenous knowledge systems continue to thrive in the face of modern challenges.

Lessons Learned and Replicability

Both case studies highlight the importance of tailoring initiatives to the unique needs and strengths of specific tribal communities. The Gond Artisans Empowerment Program demonstrates how combining traditional craftsmanship with contemporary market demands can create sustainable livelihoods, while the Baiga Herbal Medicine Centre exemplifies the potential of institutionalizing indigenous knowledge to address pressing socio-economic and environmental issues. Common threads across these successes include strong community involvement, strategic partnerships, and a balance between preservation and innovation. These examples offer valuable lessons for scaling up similar efforts. Key takeaways include the need for capacity-building programs that empower local stakeholders, the importance of leveraging technology and research to enhance credibility and reach, and the value of creating platforms that celebrate and monetize tribal heritage. By adopting these principles, other regions can replicate and adapt these models to suit their specific contexts, ensuring that the rich cultural legacies of India’s tribal communities endure and flourish in the modern era.

Emerging Trends and Innovations in Tribal Heritage Promotion

Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of innovative trends and technologies that hold immense promise for advancing the promotion of tribal heritage in Madhya Pradesh. From digital archiving and augmented reality (AR) to blockchain-enabled provenance tracking, these advancements are reshaping the way tribal traditions are documented, preserved, and shared with the world. By integrating cutting-edge tools with time-honoured practices, stakeholders are finding new avenues to amplify awareness, foster inclusivity, and ensure the sustainability of tribal cultural legacies.

Digital Archiving: Preserving Intangible Heritage for Posterity

One of the most transformative trends in tribal heritage promotion is the adoption of digital archiving technologies. Digital preservation is the strategies, techniques, and policies for guaranteeing the long-term usability, integrity, and accessibility of digital materials in spite of technological obsolescence and data decay²². UNESCO explains digital heritage as human knowledge or expression resources, such as texts, images, audio-visual material, and software that possess long-term value and need active preservation for their

²² Shee, S. (2025). Digital preservation of cultural heritage in India: A digital age. *International Journal of Humanities and Education Research*, 7(1), 260–265. <https://doi.org/10.33545/26649799.2025.v7.i1c.155>

persistence.²³ Traditional methods of documentation, such as handwritten records and physical artifacts, are inherently vulnerable to decay, loss, or misinterpretation. In contrast, digital archiving offers a durable and accessible means of capturing intangible cultural elements such as oral histories, folk songs, and ritual performances. Initiatives like the National Archives of India (NAI), Ministry of Culture exemplify this trend by digital preservation of cultural heritage through its Digitization Project. The National Virtual Library of India (NVLI) is an important initiative by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, for digital preservation and dissemination of India's cultural heritage. The NVLI has been developed with the help of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and acts as a universal digital repository containing content from several cultural institutions like libraries, museums, and archives.²⁴ The National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), initiated in 2003 by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, is crucial to the digital preservation of India's rich manuscript heritage. With millions of ancient and rare manuscripts inscribed on palm leaves, birch bark, and handmade paper, the NMM seeks to document, digitize, and preserve these precious cultural records for posterity.²⁵ The use of AI-driven transcription and translation tools has further enhanced the repository's utility, enabling multilingual access to content that was previously inaccessible to non-native speakers.

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR): Immersive Experiences for Broader Audiences

Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies are revolutionizing the way tribal heritage is experienced and appreciated²⁶. The purpose of augmented reality is to enhance and modify your surroundings. AR does this by integrating digitally created elements into a live view, usually by using a smart device's camera²⁷. AR can make digital information accessible instantly by overlaying animations, images, or other information *without* disrupting the user. AR technology is normally used in mobile applications that combine real-time visuals with useful digital content.

Unlike static exhibits or printed materials, AR and VR offer immersive, interactive platforms that transport users into the heart of tribal traditions. Once digitized, cultural heritage is ready to be accessed by all beneficiaries, both scientists and non-scientists.²⁸ Starting with non-scientists, the large public is eager to consume this information available in digital form.²⁹ In order to maximize this stream from cultural heritage towards the ordinary consumer, it is necessary to maximize the users' absorption of heritage knowledge

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Desk, Y. W. (2022, April 5). Explainer / National Virtual Library of India (NVLI). *Arts and Culture | Ministry of Culture | Library*. <https://www.manoramayearbook.in/current-affairs/india/2022/04/05/upsc-national-virtual-library-of-india-nvli.html>

²⁵ *National Mission for Manuscripts | National Mission for Manuscripts* / . (n.d.). <https://www.namami.gov.in/national-mission-manuscripts>

²⁶ Exploring Cultural heritage through Augmented Reality - Bannari Amman Institute of Technology. *Bannari Amman Institute of Technology*. Retrieved-20/May/2025 <https://www.bitsathy.ac.in/exploring-cultural-heritage-through-augmented-reality/#:~:text=This%20application%20aims%20to%20enhance,experience%20both%20engaging%20and%20accessible>.

²⁷ *Augmented vs. Virtual Reality: Comparing AR/VR* | Splunk. (n.d.). Splunk. Retrieved-20/May/2025 https://www.splunk.com/en_us/blog/learn/ar-vr.html

²⁸ Boboc, R. G., Băutu, E., Gîrbacia, F., Popovici, N., & Popovici, D. (2022). Augmented reality in cultural heritage: An overview of the last decade of applications. *Applied Sciences*, 12(19), 9859. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app12199859>

²⁹ Ibid

through such a visualization. This means that visualizations have to be adaptable, interactive, and user-oriented. On the other hand, we strongly consider scientists who deeply understand the valuable information they obtain using multi-level digitization techniques. They are striving to record everything about the artifacts: materials they are made of, weather conditions, historical period, relations between artifacts, functionalities, using procedures, etc.³⁰ By overlaying digital animations onto physical spaces, these installations recreate sensory-rich environments that evoke the sights, sounds, and emotions of tribal life.

Similarly, in contrast, virtual reality encompasses a complete environmental simulation that replaces the user's world with an entirely virtual world. The user needs to use a VR headset that covers their field of vision, isolating them completely from the physical world. With VR, a user can feel like they are inside a simulated environment. Because these virtual environments are entirely fabricated, they are often designed to be larger than life.

VR applications are being used to bring tribal heritage to remote audiences who cannot physically visit heritage sites. With predecessors such as Rome Reborn³¹ and Ancient Miletus³², Archeoguide³³ is one of the first AR-based cultural heritage projects that highlighted the influence that AR technology can instill in empowering tourism in Greece at the beginning of the 21st century and has not stopped inspiring since. India's Hampi heritage site has also adopted AR to recreate the grandeur of its ruined temples. By pointing their devices at crumbled stones, visitors can see them reassemble into their original forms digitally³⁴.

Blockchain Technology: Ensuring Authenticity and Fair Compensation

Blockchain technology is emerging as a powerful tool for addressing longstanding issues of authenticity and equitable compensation in the realm of tribal art and crafts. Counterfeiting and unauthorized reproduction have long plagued tribal artisans, undermining their livelihoods and diluting the cultural significance of their work. Blockchain offers a solution by enabling immutable records of provenance and ownership, ensuring that each piece of art or craft can be traced back to its creator. Beyond authentication, blockchain facilitates transparent payment systems that guarantee fair compensation for artisans. Smart contracts embedded in the blockchain automatically transfer payments to creators upon completion of a sale, eliminating intermediaries and reducing transaction costs. By empowering artisans to monetize their work on their terms, blockchain not only safeguards their economic interests but also reinforces the cultural value of their creations.

³⁰ Cieslik, E. *3D Digitization in Cultural Heritage Institutions Guidebook*; National Museum of Dentistry: Baltimore, MD, USA,, 2021.

³¹ Rome Reborn. Available online: <https://www.romereborn.org/> Retrieved-20/May/2025

³² Gaitatzes, A.; Christopoulos, D.; Voulgari, A.; Roussou, M. Hellenic Cultural Heritage through Immersive Virtual Archaeology. In Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Virtual Systems and Multimedia (VSMM'00), Ogaki, Japan, 3–6 October 2000; pp. 57–64.

³³ Vlahakis, V.; Ioannidis, M.; Karigiannis, J.; Tsotros, M.; Gounaris, M.; Stricker, D.; Gleue, T.; Daehne, P.; Almeida, L. Archeoguide: An augmented reality guide for archaeolog sites. *IEEE Comput. Graph. Appl.* **2002**, *22*, 52–60.

³⁴ Collins, R & Ward, T & Ogunrinde, Victor. (2025). Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in Cultural Heritage Tourism. 158-169.

Social media platforms have become indispensable tools for raising awareness of tribal heritage among younger, digitally-savvy audiences. Strategic campaigns incorporating hashtags, live streams, and influencer partnerships have proven highly effective in driving engagement and virality. Form videos showcasing tribal dances, art forms, and culinary traditions resonated strongly. Social media empowers artisans to share their traditions and stories, enhancing their crafts and fostering community pride while promoting economic growth and cultural preservation. (Gupta & Dey, 2019)³⁵.

Short with viewers, prompting a surge in online inquiries about tribal heritage tours and products. Influencer collaborations extend beyond social media to include virtual events and webinars. Prominent figures in the fields of anthropology, art, and sustainable development frequently host panel discussions and Q&A sessions featuring tribal artisans and leaders. These interactions not only amplify voices from within tribal artisans and leaders. These interactions not only amplify voices from within tribal communities but also position them as authoritative sources of knowledge and inspiration. The success of these campaigns highlights the potential of digital platforms to democratize access to tribal heritage, breaking down geographical and cultural barriers.

Data Analytics and Predictive Modeling: Optimizing Resource Allocation

Data analytics and predictive modelling are increasingly being used to optimize the allocation of resources for tribal heritage promotion. By analysing visitor demographics, engagement metrics, and market trends, policymakers can tailor initiatives to maximize impact and efficiency. For instance, heat maps generated from GPS data collected during the Tribal Art and Culture Festival revealed underserved regions where outreach efforts could be intensified. Similarly, sentiment analysis of social media posts and survey responses helps gauge public perceptions and identify areas requiring intervention. Predictive modelling tools are also aiding in the development of long-term strategies. For example, algorithms forecasting future demand for tribal handicrafts have informed decisions about training capacities and inventory management under the Van Dhan Vikas Yonjana. By anticipating market shifts and consumer preferences, these tools enable proactive planning, ensuring that initiatives remain relevant and sustainable in the face of evolving challenges.

Impact of Government Initiatives on Awareness and Cultural Preservation

The government initiatives implemented in Madhya Pradesh have demonstrated measurable impacts on raising awareness of tribal heritage and preserving cultural traditions, as evidenced by recent data and case studies. These programs have not only succeeded in amplifying visibility but also in fostering a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of tribal life among also in fostering a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of tribal life among both local communities and broader audiences.

Quantitative metrics, qualitative feedback, and real-world examples illustrate the extent to which these efforts are reshaping public perception and ensuring the continuity of indigenous practices. One of the most striking indicators of increased awareness is the surge in visitor numbers at cultural heritage sites and events associated

³⁵ Gupta A, Dey L. Social media for cultural communication among indigenous communities. Journal of Information Technology. 2019;34(2):175-189.

with tribal communities. According to data from the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, footfall in 2023, attracting 112.1 million visitors, was three times more than the 34.1 million footfalls recorded in 2022³⁶.

1. Provision of Essential Resources: Cultural preservation is inherently costly and logistically complex. Governments act as the primary patron by allocating state budgets for conservation labs, expert salaries, archival facilities, and large-scale restoration projects. This financial and structural support creates a stable environment for long-term preservation strategies that are immune to the fluctuating interests of private donors or market forces. For instance, the continuous maintenance of a national archive or a museum's climate-control system requires sustained public funding that only a government can reliably provide.

2. Formal Designation and Recognition: When a government officially designates a practice—such as a specific weaving technique, a folk music genre, or a festival—as part of the national intangible cultural heritage, it confers legitimacy and importance. This act moves the practice from the realm of local custom to a matter of national significance. This recognition often unlocks access to specific grants and protective legislation. A prime example is countries implementing their own safeguarding systems inspired by the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage lists, which brings global and national prestige to the tradition.

3. Digitization Projects: Recognizing the limitations of physical access and the threats of physical decay, governments are increasingly funding large-scale digitization initiatives. These projects involve creating high-resolution digital copies of paintings, manuscripts, photographs, and audio recordings. This not only preserves the content in a durable format but also democratizes access. Platforms like Europeana, funded by the European Union, aggregate digital collections from thousands of institutions, making Europe's cultural heritage freely accessible online to researchers and the public worldwide.

4. Sustainable Cultural Tourism: Governments strategically leverage cultural heritage for economic development through tourism, but with a preservation-first mindset. By developing designated cultural corridors, heritage walking trails, or eco-museum zones, they channel tourist traffic in a managed way. This generates revenue for local communities—through homestays, guided tours, and sales of local crafts—which in turn creates a powerful economic incentive for the community itself to actively preserve their traditions, architecture, and environment.

5. Generation of Public Interest: Governments possess the platform and resources to launch large-scale public awareness campaigns. National heritage weeks, cultural festivals, and high-profile media productions funded by cultural ministries can catapult obscure traditions into the national spotlight. For example, a government-sponsored documentary on a vanishing language or a nationally televised traditional craft competition can spark widespread public discourse, pride, and interest in a way that small-scale private efforts cannot.

³⁶ Grover, D. (2024, July 24). Madhya Pradesh sets record tourism footfalls in 2023 - Travel Span. *Travel Span*. Retrieved- 20/May/2025 <https://travelspace.in/madhya-pradesh-sets-record-tourism-footfalls-in-2023/>

6. Educational Integration: The most effective way to ensure long-term awareness is to embed it in education. Government mandates to include local history, traditional arts, music, and folklore in school curricula guarantee systematic exposure. Students learn to play traditional instruments, perform folk dances, or study indigenous knowledge systems as part of their formal education. This creates a deep-seated, early-appreciated understanding of cultural heritage, ensuring that future generations become innate custodians of their culture.

7. Creation of New Audiences and Markets: Government-organized festivals, craft fairs, and cultural exports create new platforms for traditional artists. A national craft bazaar sponsored by a cultural ministry connects rural artisans directly with urban consumers and international tourists. This not only generates income but also exposes the art form to new audiences whose interest can lead to further demand, innovation, and sustainability. It helps traditions evolve and remain relevant in a contemporary context.

8. Strengthening National Identity: In diverse nations, government initiatives that celebrate the culture of all communities contribute to a pluralistic yet unified national identity. By preserving and promoting the heritage of various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, a government sends a powerful message of inclusion and respect. This helps forge a shared sense of belonging where different groups see their identity reflected in the national narrative, promoting social cohesion and mutual understanding.

Challenges and Limitations: Barriers to Effective Implementation

Despite the commendable progress made by government initiatives to promote tribal heritage in Madhya Pradesh, several challenges and limitations persist, hindering their full potential. These obstacles span the financial, infrastructural and socio-cultural domains, necessitating a critical examination to identify areas for improvement and propose viable solutions.

Financial Constraints

A primary challenge is the persistent shortfall in funding allocated to tribal heritage preservation programs. Although schemes such as Van Dhan Vikas Yojana and the Tribal Museum have garnered significant attention, the budgets earmarked for these initiatives often fall short of meeting the scale and complexity of their objectives. The limited allocation restricts the scope of activities, leaving critical components such as capacity-building workshops, advanced technological integration, and long-term maintenance underfunded. Moreover, delays in fund distributions exacerbate the issue, with many grassroots-level projects experiencing prolonged stagnation due to bureaucratic bottlenecks. To address this, the government could explore alternative financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships (PPP) and CSR contributions, to supplement existing resources. Establishing a dedicated Tribal Heritage Conservation Fund, modelled after successful global precedents, could provide a stable and transparent source of funding for future projects.

Infrastructural Deficiencies

Infrastructural limitations pose another significant barrier, particularly in rural and remote areas where many tribal communities reside. Poor road connectivity, unreliable electricity supply, and inadequate sanitation facilities impede access to heritage sites and hinder the effective implementation of development programs. For example, the Tribal Art and Culture Festival, despite its popularity, faces logistical challenges in transporting equipment and participants to venues located in interior districts like Dindori and Anuppur. Similarly, the lack of internet connectivity in many tribal-dominated regions limits the reach of digital initiatives such as the Madhya Pradesh Tribal Heritage App. Strengthening infrastructure requires coordinated efforts between state agencies, local governments, and private stakeholders. Investments in building all-weather roads, installing renewable energy systems, and expanding broadband networks would not only enhance accessibility but also stimulate ancillary economic activities, creating a multiplier effect on regional development.

Socio-Cultural Challenges

Socio-cultural factors also present complex hurdles in aligning government initiatives with the needs and aspirations of tribal communities. One recurring issue is the disconnect between top-down planning and bottom-up participation. Many programs, while well-intentioned, fail to incorporate the perspectives and priorities of indigenous groups, leading to mismatches in expectations and outcomes. For instance, some artisans involved in the Hunar Haat initiative have expressed concerns about pricing mechanisms and market access, which do not always reflect their input costs or cultural values. Additionally, generational divides within tribal communities complicate efforts to preserve intangible heritage. Younger members influenced by urban lifestyles and modern education often exhibit reduced interest in traditional practices, posing a threat to the transmission of cultural knowledge. Bridging these gaps requires fostering inclusive governance models that prioritize community engagement and decision-making. Establishing Community Advisory Councils comprising tribal leaders, youth representatives, and experts could ensure that initiatives are culturally relevant and sustainably implemented.

Technological and Capacity Limitations

While technological innovations have enhanced the visibility and accessibility of tribal heritage, capacity constraints limit their effective utilization. Many artisans and local stakeholders lack the technical skills required to leverage digital tools and platforms, reducing the overall impact of initiatives like virtual exhibitions and e-commerce portals. Addressing this gap necessitates targeted capacity-building programs combining digital literacy and entrepreneurial skills. Partnerships with educational institutions and tech startups could facilitate the development of user-friendly applications tailored to the needs of tribal communities ensuring that technological advancements translate into tangible benefits.

Recommendations for Improvement

To overcome these challenges, a multi-pronged strategy is essential.

First, increasing financial allocations and diversifying funding sources can provide the necessary resources to scale up existing programs and introduce new ones.

Second, prioritizing infrastructure development in tribal-dominated regions will enhance accessibility and create an enabling environment for cultural preservation.

Third, adopting participatory approaches that empower tribal communities to take ownership of initiatives will ensure alignment with their cultural values and aspirations.

Finally, investing in capacity-building and technological training will equip stakeholders with the tools needed to maximize the benefits of modern innovations.

By addressing these barriers through targeted interventions, Madhya Pradesh can strengthen its efforts to preserve and promote tribal heritage, ensuring that these initiatives achieve their intended goals and deliver lasting impact on both cultural and socio-economic fronts.

Conclusion

This research has sought to examine the government's role in promoting awareness and preserving the rich tribal traditions of Madhya Pradesh with a focus on recent schemes, data-driven analysis, and emerging trends. Through an exploration of initiatives such as the Tribal Welfare Department's Development Programs, the Janjatiya Gurav Divas, the Tribal Museum in Bhopal, and platforms like Hunar Haat, this study underscores the transformative potential of these efforts in fostering cultural preservation, community empowerment, and inclusive growth.

However, the research also highlights critical tensions and limitations in current preservation efforts. The institutionalization of tribal traditions through museums and government programs, while valuable for documentation and awareness-raising, risks transforming living cultural practices into static exhibits. There exists an inherent paradox between the need for formal preservation structures and the organic, evolving nature of indigenous knowledge systems. The most successful initiatives, such as the Baiga Herbal Medicine Center, have managed this tension by adopting hybrid models that combine institutional support with community leadership and decision-making power. These cases demonstrate that preservation efforts must maintain flexibility to allow for the natural adaptation and evolution of tribal traditions in contemporary contexts.

The study makes several important theoretical contributions to the field of heritage preservation. It expands the conceptual framework of Adi Prasaran beyond simple transmission to encompass dynamic, iterative processes of cultural reproduction. The research also establishes clear linkages between cultural preservation and sustainable development when initiatives are grounded in indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems. Furthermore, it proposes a comprehensive evaluation methodology that considers both quantitative indicators (economic impact, participation rates) and qualitative measures (community wellbeing, cultural vitality).

These theoretical advances provide valuable tools for assessing and designing cultural preservation programs worldwide.

Looking forward, the research points to several critical areas for improvement and further study. There is a pressing need to establish more robust mechanisms for tribal self-determination in heritage matters, potentially through the creation of tribal-led heritage councils with substantive decision-making authority. The increasing role of digital technologies in preservation efforts raises important questions about indigenous data sovereignty that must be addressed through ethical guidelines and protocols. Future research should employ longitudinal methods to track the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and skills within communities participating in preservation programs. Additionally, comparative studies across different Indian states and international contexts could help identify best practices and innovative approaches to common challenges.

Ultimately, the Madhya Pradesh case study offers valuable insights for rethinking cultural preservation paradigms globally. The most successful initiatives demonstrate that authentic preservation requires moving beyond mere conservation of traditions to fostering what might be termed "regenerative cultural ecosystems." In this model, tribal communities serve not as passive recipients of preservation efforts but as active architects of their cultural future. The state's role shifts from director to facilitator, providing resources and platforms while respecting indigenous autonomy over cultural representation and evolution. This approach recognizes that living traditions must retain the capacity to adapt and innovate while maintaining their essential character and meaning. As Madhya Pradesh continues to refine its tribal heritage programs, its experiences offer both inspiration and cautionary lessons for cultural preservation efforts worldwide.

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