

ADI SANSKRITI: A STUDY ON DIGITAL PRESERVATION, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL CULTURE IN INDIA

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Abstract

*The rapid expansion of digital technologies has created new opportunities for the preservation and promotion of indigenous cultural heritage. This study examines **AdiSanskriti**, a national-level digital initiative launched by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, India, aimed at preserving tribal culture while supporting education and economic empowerment. Using a qualitative research approach based on secondary data, the study analyzes official reports and platform content to understand the structure, objectives, and functional components of AdiSanskriti. Content analysis is employed to identify key themes such as digital documentation of tribal heritage, transmission of indigenous knowledge, institutional governance, and livelihood generation through online market places. The findings reveal that AdiSanskriti functions as an integrated digital ecosystem combining a cultural repository, digital learning modules, and an e-commerce platform for tribal artisans. Institutional guidance by autonomous bodies and State Tribal Research Institutes ensures ethical oversight, cultural authenticity, and community participation. The study highlights the platform's potential to enhance cultural visibility, support intergenerational knowledge transfer, and create economic opportunities for marginalized communities. The challenges related to digital literacy, infrastructure, and sustainability remain. The paper concludes that AdiSanskriti represents a promising model for digitally mediated cultural preservation and empowerment, offering insights for policymakers, cultural institutions, and researchers seeking to integrate technology with heritage conservation and inclusive development.*

Keywords: AdiSanskriti, AdiVishwavidyalaya, AdiHaat, AdiSampada, Tribal Culture

INTRODUCTION

Tribal communities form a vital cultural foundation of Indian civilization, with traditions, languages, art forms, and ecological knowledge shaped by centuries of collective wisdom and close interaction with nature. Tribal culture represents not only identity but also a dynamic system of knowledge that supports sustainable living, creativity, and community values. However, in the contemporary socio-economic context, these traditions face significant challenges due to globalization, modernization, migration, and weakening intergenerational transmission, leading to the gradual decline of many indigenous art forms and oral traditions. Conventional methods of preserving tribal heritage, such as museums, archives, and anthropological documentation, have played an important role but often remain limited in accessibility and community participation, tending to treat culture as static. In contrast, contemporary approaches emphasize participatory and

sustainable models that recognize indigenous communities as active custodians of their heritage. Within this shift, digital technology has emerged as a powerful tool for cultural preservation and promotion. Digitization and digital platforms enable the recording, storage, and dissemination of indigenous knowledge through diverse media formats, expanding access beyond geographical boundaries and strengthening authenticity and cultural ownership. Digital platforms also link cultural preservation with economic empowerment by enabling tribal artisans to access wider markets through e-commerce and digital marketplaces. This integration of preservation, education, and entrepreneurship reflects a broader understanding of heritage as both a cultural and productive asset. In India, such initiatives are often guided by autonomous or semi-autonomous bodies that ensure ethical governance and institutional support. Situated within this context, the present study examines a national-level digital platform for tribal culture, focusing on how digital infrastructure integrates documentation, education, and market access. The study adopts a conceptual and analytical approach based on web-based content analysis, viewing the platform as a model of digital cultural infrastructure and highlighting the role of digital technology in strengthening tribal culture within the digital knowledge society.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is primarily conceptual and analytical. It examines the structural framework, functional objectives, and developmental significance of the digital platform using secondary data such as official reports, policy documents, scholarly literature, and platform-related publications.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Seerangan and Ravi (2025) investigate how **digital technologies enable knowledge sharing among tribal communities**, highlighting platforms for cultural exchange, documentation of indigenous practices, and interactive learning. The study demonstrates that technology strengthens intergenerational knowledge transfer while preserving cultural heritage in accessible digital formats. Singh (2025) explores the **transformative role of information technology in tribal education**, demonstrating how digital tools enhance access to learning resources, facilitate interactive pedagogy, and bridge educational gaps in remote areas. The research highlights that IT integration fosters skill development and broader socio-economic participation among tribal communities. Natanael (2025) uses a **bibliometric approach** to examine global efforts in the digital preservation of local wisdom and traditional knowledge systems. The study identifies key trends including increased research on digital repositories, community involvement, and ethical considerations, emphasizing that digitalization strategies must be culturally aware and respect indigenous epistemologies. Yeddu and Kudumula (2025) provide insights into **tribal entrepreneurship in Andhra Pradesh**, illustrating how digital transformation supports local development. E-commerce, digital marketing, and online resource management enable tribal entrepreneurs to expand market access, increase revenue, and promote indigenous products, integrating technology with traditional livelihoods. Mane (2024) examines the intersection of **libraries, technology, and gender equality**, showing how digital awareness programs empower marginalized tribal groups, particularly women. The study underscores the role of digital libraries as knowledge hubs providing educational content, vocational training, and community

information, thereby supporting inclusive development. Chigwada, et al (2024) explore preservation strategies for **indigenous knowledge in cultural institutions**, emphasizing the critical role of digital repositories and web presence. Findings indicate that while digital platforms enhance documentation and dissemination, many institutions still lack robust digital infrastructure, highlighting the need for frameworks aligned with **FAIR principles** (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable). Gond and Upadhyay (2024) analyze the **Digital India Programme** and its implications for rural tribal development. They identify both challenges, such as infrastructure limitations and digital literacy gaps, and opportunities including e-governance services, online training, and digital inclusion initiatives, which collectively enhance the quality of life for tribal populations. Bhaduria (2023) investigates the **empowerment of tribal communities through technology over time**, highlighting sustained interventions such as online learning modules, e-commerce platforms, and information dissemination portals. These initiatives enhance self-reliance, entrepreneurial opportunities, and civic participation, demonstrating the socio-economic impact of digital inclusion. Chandra and Shabran (2023) provide a critical analysis of the **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) in India**, emphasizing how national-level digital libraries preserve indigenous medicinal, agricultural, and cultural knowledge. The study argues that digital repositories, when supported by policy and legal safeguards, improve accessibility and protect vulnerable knowledge systems, enabling both academic research and community engagement. Rathour, et al (2023) investigate a **digital repository initiative by the Government of India** aimed at preserving and promoting tribal cultural heritage. The study highlights the role of centralized digital platforms in safeguarding artifacts, traditional knowledge, and cultural practices while enhancing research access and public awareness. Fredriksson (2021) analyzes India's **TKDL**, highlighting its role in safeguarding indigenous knowledge from misappropriation through standardized digital documentation. The research underscores the importance of integrating **legal frameworks and intellectual property governance** in digital preservation initiatives to ensure long-term cultural sustainability. Binoj, et al (2018) examine the broader impact of technology on **tribal development**, showing that digital interventions enhance educational outcomes, foster social empowerment, improve communication, and provide access to government services. Their findings suggest technology serves as a foundation for sustainable community growth, bridging socio-economic gaps.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine AdiSanskriti as a digital cultural infrastructure for preserving and promoting tribal culture.
2. To study the integration of cultural preservation, digital education, and economic empowerment within a digital platform.
3. To evaluate the role of digital repositories and learning systems in safeguarding tribal knowledge and traditions.
4. To assess the contribution of digital marketplaces to livelihood generation and economic sustainability for tribal artisans.

- To analyze the socio-cultural and economic impacts of digital platforms on tribal communities.

RESEARCH METHEDODOLOGY

The present study adopts a **qualitative research approach** based on secondary data to examine a national-level digital platform developed for the preservation, promotion, and economic empowerment of tribal culture. Data were collected from government publications, reports of autonomous and guiding bodies, and other authentic digital sources. The official platform was reviewed, including its objectives, structure, and functional features, to understand its vision, scope, and operational framework. **Content analysis** was employed to systematically identify key themes such as cultural preservation, digital documentation, indigenous knowledge transmission, economic empowerment, and institutional governance, enabling an understanding of how the platform integrates cultural, educational, and economic functions into a cohesive digital ecosystem. This qualitative approach provides an in-depth exploration of the platform’s design, functionality, and potential impact without relying on numerical data or statistical analysis.

DISCUSSION

AdiSanskriti as a Digital Cultural Infrastructure:

The launch of **AdiSanskriti** in September 2025 marked a significant step in India’s efforts to preserve and promote tribal culture through digital innovation. Introduced by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs at the AdiKarmayogi Abhiyan conference in New Delhi, the platform is described as the world’s first digital university dedicated to tribal culture, combining heritage preservation, education, and market access. AdiSanskriti is designed as a comprehensive digital ecosystem that documents, teaches, and supports the economic use of tribal knowledge, art forms, and socio-cultural practices. Its primary aim is to protect cultural traditions that face decline due to modernization and changing socio-economic conditions. By presenting tribal heritage in digital formats, the platform improves accessibility and encourages sustained engagement with indigenous cultures. The platform operates under the guidance of an autonomous body within the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, ensuring ethical governance and community participation. Collaboration with academic experts, cultural practitioners, policymakers, and State Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) from several Indian states strengthens content authenticity and grassroots involvement. Functioning as a dynamic cultural repository, AdiSanskriti hosts multimedia resources such as videos, images, and interactive content covering tribal art, music, dance, folklore, rituals, and crafts, thereby supporting digital preservation and wider cultural visibility.

Platform Features	Insight
Documentation of tribal knowledge, art, and socio-cultural practices	Preserves tangible and intangible heritage at risk from modernization.
Autonomous institutional guidance	Ensures governance, ethical documentation, and alignment with policies.
Collaboration with experts and TRIs	Enhances credibility, authenticity, and community participation.

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Multimedia content (videos, images, interactive tools)	Supports documentation, dissemination, and wider engagement.
Digital accessibility	Enables younger and non-local audiences to learn about and appreciate tribal culture.

AdiVishwavidyalaya: Digital Tribal Art Academy

One of the central components of the platform is **AdiVishwavidyalaya**, which functions as a digital learning environment offering structured online courses in tribal art forms. As per official descriptions, the academy currently hosts **45 immersive courses** covering tribal dance, music, painting, crafts, folklore, and related cultural skills. These courses are designed to facilitate both academic understanding and experiential engagement with traditional practices. By leveraging multimedia and interactive digital pedagogy, AdiVishwavidyalaya makes tribal knowledge accessible to learners across India and internationally, thus promoting intercultural dialogue and appreciation. This digital education component addresses a critical gap in traditional heritage preservation: formal transmission and learning. Historically, tribal skills have been transmitted through apprenticeship and community participation, but such modes are vulnerable to disruption due to migration, changing lifestyles, and economic pressures. Digitally mediated learning offers continuity in a format that is flexible, scalable, and inclusive.

Feature	Insight
45 online courses on tribal dance, music, painting, crafts, and folklore	Provides structured learning, preserving traditional skills and knowledge digitally.
Multimedia and interactive pedagogy	Enhances engagement, experiential learning, and accessibility across India and internationally.
Focus on formal transmission of tribal skills	Addresses gaps in traditional apprenticeship models disrupted by migration or lifestyle changes.
Digital accessibility	Ensures flexible, scalable, and inclusive learning for wider audiences.

AdiSampada: Socio-Cultural Repository:

The **AdiSampada repository** serves as the archival backbone of the platform, housing over 5,000 curated digital documents across five key themes: dance, painting, textiles, artefacts, and livelihoods. It functions as a long-term digital archive that preserves both tangible and intangible aspects of tribal culture. By organizing content thematically, the repository supports scholarly research, education, and community access, while safeguarding cultural memory in durable digital formats. The platform also emphasizes the role of **institutional and autonomous guiding bodies** under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Their involvement ensures ethical documentation, cultural authenticity, and community participation. These governance structures provide strategic direction, standardization, and legitimacy, aligning the platform’s initiatives with national cultural and tribal welfare policies.

Feature	Insight
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More 5,000 curated digital documents on dance, painting, textiles, artefacts, and livelihoods	Preserves tribal heritage and provides access for research and education.
Thematic categorization of content	Supports organized study and long-term preservation.
Oversight by autonomous bodies under Ministry of Tribal Affairs	Ensures authenticity, ethics, and community participation.
Policy frameworks and guidelines	Provide credibility, standardization, and cultural alignment.
Digital accessibility	Enables younger and non-local audiences to learn about and appreciate tribal culture.

AdiHaat: Digital Marketplace for Tribal Artisans:

The third pillar, **AdiHaat**, introduces a critical economic dimension to the platform. Functioning initially in partnership with the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)**, AdiHaat is designed to be an online marketplace where tribal artisans can sell their handmade products directly to consumers. This marketplace seeks to address longstanding challenges in tribal economic participation. Traditionally, tribal artisans have had limited access to formal markets, often relying on intermediaries who capture much of the economic value. By providing direct access to buyers, AdiHaat aims to increase income opportunities, improve economic security, and ensure sustainable livelihoods. The platform’s linkage with TRIFED aligns it with broader government efforts to digitize tribal commerce and integrate artisan products into national and global supply chains. This is addressed the integration of cultural preservation, digital education, and economic empowerment.

Feature	Insight
Online marketplace for tribal artisans (AdiHaat)	Enables direct market access and improves artisan livelihoods.
Partnership with TRIFED	Strengthens alignment with government initiatives and expands market reach.
Integration with learning modules and cultural repositories	Links cultural preservation, education, and economic empowerment.
Focus on traditional skills and products	Sustains heritage through learning and income generation.

Digital Platforms and Broader Impacts:

The integrated model of **AdiSanskriti** reflects contemporary heritage preservation approaches that move beyond static archiving by presenting tribal culture as a living and evolving system. Through curated archives, educational resources, and marketplace features, the platform links cultural preservation with economic empowerment and promotes intercultural learning and visibility of diverse tribal traditions. However, the success of such digital initiatives depends on factors beyond technology, including digital literacy, internet access, and effective marketing. Experiences from

similar platforms show that limited skills, low buyer engagement, and logistical challenges can hinder outcomes, highlighting the need for capacity-building and outreach. The AdiSanskriti demonstrates the potential of digital platforms to support intergenerational knowledge transfer, enhance cultural visibility, and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for tribal artisans in the digital age.

Feature	Insight
Integrated archives, learning modules, and marketplace	Combines preservation, education, and economic empowerment.
Multimedia content and courses	Enables knowledge transfer and wider engagement.
Online marketplace with artisan listings	Increases visibility and supports livelihoods.
Digital accessibility	Promotes global recognition and cultural awareness.
Governance and ethical oversight	Ensures authenticity and community participation.
Challenges: digital literacy, internet access, marketing	Shows need for capacity building and outreach.

Collaborations and Partner Platforms:

The effectiveness and reach of the AdiSanskriti platform are further enhanced through strategic collaborations with government agencies, academic institutions, and other digital initiatives. Notably, the platform collaborates with the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)** to facilitate market access for tribal artisans and ensure fair trade practices. Partnerships with **State Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs)** across multiple states, including Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Kerala, provide authenticity and local expertise for content curation and documentation of tribal traditions. The collaborations with digital education platforms and cultural organizations help expand the learning modules, enhance technological infrastructure, and promote awareness about indigenous heritage nationally and internationally. These alliances not only strengthen the platform’s operational capacity but also foster knowledge exchange, community participation, and wider visibility for tribal art, culture, and socio-economic initiatives. Such collaborative models demonstrate that digital heritage initiatives are most effective when supported by multi-stakeholder networks combining governance, technology, academia, and community involvement

LIMITATION

This study is based only on secondary data, so it cannot fully capture how tribal communities use the platform or what their experiences are. Unequal access to the internet and digital skills may limit participation, especially in remote areas. There is also a lack of data on AdiHaat’s financial outcomes, which makes it difficult to assess its real economic benefits. The platform’s long-term success depends on ongoing support and careful oversight to avoid misrepresenting tribal art.

Future studies could involve surveys, interviews, or field visits to understand community engagement better. Research on improving digital skills and tracking real-world impact on livelihoods would also be useful.

CONCLUSION

Digital platforms such as AdiSanskriti illustrate an evolving approach to cultural preservation that integrates heritage safeguarding with education and economic empowerment. By combining a digital learning academy, cultural repository, and online marketplace, the platform demonstrates how tribal knowledge and artistic traditions can be documented, shared, and valued within contemporary digital frameworks. It supports intergenerational knowledge transfer, enhances the visibility of marginalized cultures, and creates livelihood opportunities for artisans. Institutional guidance by an autonomous body ensures ethical oversight, community participation, and alignment with national cultural policies, highlighting the role of governance in digital heritage initiatives. Despite challenges such as digital literacy, infrastructure, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability, future research should evaluate user participation, economic outcomes, and socio-cultural impact. Overall, AdiSanskriti offers a replicable model for preserving tribal heritage while promoting socio-economic inclusion in the digital era.

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