



Intersections of Language, Culture, and Community Practices: Cultural Heritage Preservation among Tribal Communities in the Malyagiri Mountain Foothills

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Abstract

This study explains the intersections of language, culture, and community practices among tribal communities in understanding cultural heritage that is preserved and revitalized at the foothills of the Malyagiri mountain. It illustrates cases to understand their social organization, linguistic diversity, and cultural ethos. Globally, tribal communities face challenges in preserving their languages due to globalization, modernization, urbanization, industrialization, and changing socio-economic pressures. Similar problems are found among tribes at the Malyagiri foothills; their rich linguistic traditions and heterogeneous community practices constantly shape their everyday lives. However, increasing interaction with mainstream society results in processes of assimilation, acculturation, and integration, which place their local languages and cultural heritage in a vulnerable position. Accordingly, the study explains how community engagement contributes to the preservation and revitalization of culture, languages, and community practices. The study involved qualitative research design, using interviews as a tool of data collection from 133 respondents representing diverse socio-economic and demographic backgrounds. It also included focus group discussions comprising 5 to 10 participants to capture the collective cultural experiences of the community. Participant observation was used to evaluate community ceremonies, celebrations, and rituals. The findings highlight the collaborative efforts of local organizations, community members, and NGOs, which document linguistic heritage and implement educational programmes. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, such as the decline of dialects, language shifts toward dominant languages, rapid social change, and inadequate financial resources. To address these issues, digital technologies are used, including online platforms, digital archives, social media, and digital storytelling for documentation and awareness. The study concludes by highlighting the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer, with elders playing a guiding role in the community, and community-led initiatives that encourage youth participation to sustain language and culture. These efforts help secure community identity for future generations and beyond, as long as there is continued documentation, education, and collective response for the preservation of heritage and sustainable cultural continuity.

Key words: Cultural Heritage, Language Preservation, Community Engagement, Malyagiri Tribal Communities

1. Introduction

Language is a medium to communicate with people, it assigns meaning and response, it transfers knowledge, culture, and practices for next generation. The language can be in different forms like English, Odia, Hindi or any other languages or dialects (Mohanty & Malik, 2008). Further, it also adds messages in the form of oral storytelling, and it adds cultural practices of different communities, it may be tribes, castes, races, or classes (Vansina, 1985). Storytelling is a practice as old as culture itself, it incorporates knowledge, laws, customs, beliefs, art, morals, and other social norms (Tylor, 1871). Oral storytelling is an illustration of voices and gestures, and it takes many forms like chants, songs, epic poems, rhymes, and more. There may not be all stories historically precise and correct, but their primary role is to underpin and convey the cultural consistency of a tribal community. Consequently, it is vital for both amusing and educating members of a society, integrating myths, religious narratives, legends, proverbs, fables, prayers, and instructional content.

Presently, the language, culture, and identity of numerous tribal communities are steadily fading because of foreign culture, art, music, dress, language, and media. This acculturation and assimilation lead to a loss of local tribal identity, the amalgamation of cultures with non-tribes, and the dominance of foreign languages over local tribal ones. Consequently, quite a few tribal communities and their languages, culture and community practices are rare now.

It is the urgency to safeguard, protect, preserve, and uphold rare languages and dialects that are spoken by tribes, and it becomes deceptive when rereading historical records. For example, India recognized roughly 1,652 languages in 1961 Census. But this number dramatically declined to 108 to 132 by the 1971 Census, when government decided to categorize languages in only list languages with over 10000 speakers, and grouping them in a smaller one under 'others. This means tribes are deprived of recognition as separate language or dialect group, since they do not fall under list languages and their number is small. Similarly, the People's Linguistic Survey of India in 2013, it recorded the declining of about 220 languages in the last five decades, from which 197 languages were classified as endangered. Besides, the criteria of the Government of India on defining languages with scripts, recognizes only 122 languages, an unambiguous difference to the 780 languages documented by the People's Linguistic Survey of India. This inconsistency is due to the government's inclination to omit and delete from the languages list spoken by less than 10,000 individuals (Mallikarjun, 2012).

According to UNESCO, a language is classified in the vanished list when it is no longer spoken or remembered by people, whereas endangered languages are characterized into vulnerable, endangered, severely endangered, and critically endangered stages. Particularly, UNESCO has identified 42 Indian languages as critically endangered in the list (UNESCO, 2003). So, it is the pressing importance for collective efforts of people aimed at preserving, safeguarding, and protecting of linguistic heritage of each society.

Tribes play a central role in preserving, protecting, and safeguarding their land, water, and forests for environmental sustainability (Barla, 2021). Hence, tribal

characteristics address climate change, environmental degradation, pollution, and global warming. This tragic environment is created by humans and nature itself. They have faith that they should always be kind and respect the environment and their surroundings as it is their future generations. So, they put their collective efforts to protect and preserve their culture, arts, religion, and crafts.

Language preservation simply is understood as to protect or maintain languages that are slowly endangered today, or getting much pathetic and risk of wipe up from society. Hence, this uses different strategies to revive, document, and promote again; and continued to serve the community as whole (Romaine, 2007). There are no specific methods to perverse language like top-down or bottom-up (Eicken et al., 2021). But different aspects can be used to preserve language like promotion of culture, revitalizing different aspects of tribes, documenting arts, crafts, and literature, and formulating different policy that help to grow tribes and always put collaboration spirit in organising different events, works, and others (Fitzgerald, 2021). These kind of methods, approaches, and tactics not only help strengthen their languages conservation but also enlighten Odisha and India's cultural heritage as national pride to all of us.

India is well-known for its unity in diversity, is full of heterogeneity in its nature like language, culture, religion, foods, caste, class, race, politics, tribes, economics, geography, and others. Having this multitude of differences but this again unites them in one thread of language as unifying factors to community feelings. These characteristics cannot be avoided while discussing cultural heritage and its preservation.

1.1 Literature Review

Heritage is a concept. It is multidimensional in nature. It embraces tangible and intangible elements. The tangible aspects of heritage include physical sites, built environments and landscapes whereas intangible aspects involve like emotions, values, customs, traditions, and memories (Nilson & Thorell, 2018). Cultural heritage is another concept that is used in contemporary society to engage past to present, and construct meanings, memories, and identities for specific society. It is the backbone that shapes and narrates national and regional identities and stereotypes by accommodating modern and postmodern contexts (Boyd & Timothy, 2003; Tivers, 2002).

UNESCO as an institution, points out that cultural heritage is both tangible artifacts and intangible attributes; that passed down from one generation to another. This definition again proved to admit both material and non-material aspects of society as preservation heritage culture (Nilson & Thorell, 2018). Other studies also define in similar fashion, it is the dynamic process of interaction with people and heritage, not the static left behind past (Carman & Sorensen, 2009). By this scholarly discourse, it represents both past with present i.e., economic, social, political, religious, culture, and traditional aspects of society (Khakzad, 2015).

As it was said, language preservation is always intertwined with several approaches i.e., bottom-up and top-down (Gaymer et al., 2014). Further, these approaches align with power, cultural representation, and agency in the formulation of heritage. While explaining the bottom-up approach, it is focus on the local or regional level concentrating on culture, language, and community practices – greatly involving art, dance, music, oral tradition. This method is used for studying the subaltern and marginalised communities (Hornberger, 1997) and this helps in community participation as the core instrument to sustain linguistic and cultural diversity. In contrast, the top-down approach is shaped by dominant cultural ideologies and often influences western epistemologies. It prioritizes mainstream or hegemonic cultures while neglecting local and regional traditions. This approach often involves powerful social institutions that impose their values and norms on society. Frequently, it results in the neglect of minority languages and cultural expressions. Further that led to a form of preservation that prioritizes dominant cultures over marginalized ones (Lears, 1985).

Both methods have limitations as they can be one-sided. Although they both contribute to cultural preservation, each shows limited when practically applied in isolation. To truly preserve the languages and cultures of marginalized tribal communities, it is important to identify and hold their folk songs, art, stories, music, and other cultural elements. Cultural laws, policies, and practices must be inclusive and non-discriminatory, accepting all cultures without judgement based on caste, class, gender, race, social status, region, religion, political ideology, or societal ethos.

By analysis of above literature, it is confident and proved that the preservation of tribal languages from the past to till now is well- accepted by all; and it shows the pride of the community and their cultural identity as well. Language is a medium that constantly connect the people's food habits, their worldviews, their dressing sense as unique in each tribe, exhibits different art forms within tribes and rest – that connect as rich cultural heritage among the tribal society. Respecting the uniqueness of tribal culture, language, and community practices, the study further its research by drawing out the PhD research of author himself where he contextualizes community led language preservation as the core instrument to all tribal communities.

1.2 Formulation of Research Questions and Objectives

This research study is the analysis of complex relationships, i.e., of culture, language, and community practices among the tribes of Malyagiri Mountain foothills. This complexity further unified and contributes against and renew the cultural heritage and withholds even when there is rapid socio-economic change. This ensure and endure linguistic and cultural identities of tribes. Even, it inspects and keeps their original characteristics of tribes despite pressure on them i.e., modernization, globalization, urbanization, and industrialization.

The study also scrutinizes challenges and issues of language, culture, and community practices when these are acculturated, assimilated, and integrated with dominant

language group, dominant and popular culture group, and mainstream community practices. Further, there is lack of revive and limited institutional support for tribes for their culture, identity, politics, food habits, language, and practices. Hence, with these inappropriate circumstances, their distinct culture, language, community practice should give more priority as the part of community engagement – and these reflects as cultural preservation. Further, the study also explores how collective participation of tribes in their ritual, cultural practices, and everyday community life – these again become instrument of preserving culture, language, and community practices.

The study also emphasis and explores intergenerational knowledge transfer. This is possible only by elders who are the custodians of wisdom, knowledge, cultural heritage, linguistic transmission, and community practices. To keep up the spirit of knowledge transfer, youth participation is must, they structured the programmes and initiated different community activities integrating intergenerational knowledge in the community. These knowledges are well-documented through variety methods i.e., cultural involvement camps in the villages, languages classes for young kids in village in oral form, ritual practices done during the different celebration and ceremonies in the village, and contemporary times digital documentation via YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other platforms – promoting and helping culture, language, community practices grow dynamically in the community and sustain its cultural pride and identity.

The study also inspects the collaborative efforts of local organizations and tribal communities highlighting their development of educational programs, documentation of language and cultural heritage, implementing sustainable revitalizing strategies in local or villages. Here, the transformative parts are shown through digital technologies i.e., make available and access to digital archives, linguistic resources, and adoptive methods to capture cultural awareness via digital storytelling – thinking social media platforms as instrument.

2. Materials and Methods

The research used qualitative design to analysis, describe, and explore the intersection of language, culture, and community practices of tribes in the foothills of Malyagiri Mountain ranges to preserve cultural heritage. This approach was considered to appropriate in-depth understanding of lived experiences, community driven practices and indigenous knowledge systems that cannot be effectively apprehended through quantitative measures.

The study areas were selected based on the concentration of tribal communities. Research was centred on Pallahara sub-division in Angul district, where extensive fieldwork was conducted. A total of 133 households were surveyed. The field survey encompassed 5 villages from Iswarnagar Gram Panchayat in Pallahara block (Rugdi Sahi with 12 households, Gudapada with 27 households, Kansamunda with 33 households, Rayadihi with 36 households, and Samal with 25 households).

The distribution of tribal households in the study area is as follows; Ho (75), Munda (30), Juang (15), Bhuyan (10) and Sahar/Sabar (3). They are the prominent tribes in this locality, but slowly other non-tribes come to this foothill of Malyagiri mountain. This may in future affect them and they will be in endangered. Hence, it is vital to protect, preserve, safeguard their cultures and languages. As it is noticed in many studies that majority of tribes maintain and uphold distinct cultural practices, traditions, customs, and folklore. These contribute meaningfully to their local identity. However, the endangered tribes in this study face vulnerabilities and marginalization. The study also knowingly includes all sections of participants elders, community leaders, cultural practitioners, youth, members engaged in traditional and contemporary livelihoods. Hence, it represents comprehensive understanding of intergenerational perspectives on cultural practices, language use, and community engagement.

The study is mostly purposive in nature, hence, technique used to select participants who have relevant knowledge and experience related to linguistic and cultural practices. In total, there were 133 respondents selected for in-depth interviews to capture variations in socio-economic and demographic profiles. In addition, focus group discussions (FGDs) were set up, each consisting of 5 to 10 participants, to enable collective reproduction on cultural engagement, community practices, and preservation strategies.

For this study semi-structured interview was conducted with 133 respondents and explored individual and household socio-economic, cultural values, religion, politics, and perception of change in language aspects. This helped in researching and maintaining uniformity in interviews conducted. The study also used focus group discussion with members of several tribal leaders and intellectual communities to know their shared meanings of each community and their engagement in cultural practices and collective memory. By this, we can know the narratives, collaborative efforts, and initiatives of preserving culture, language, and practices, and intergenerational dialogue among them. Further, participant observation was used to observe minutely about their rituals, celebrations, ceremonies, festivals, and others. These methods are used by study to witness cultural practices both ordinary and special context and document it to represent their expression, community involvement, and linguistic practices.

The data qualitatively collected from the field was analyzed thematically i.e., interview transcripts, field notes, and focus group discussion. This data was again systematically and analytically arranged to suit with repeated patterns and form different themes to associate language, culture, community practices.

The study followed ethical principles like informed consent for all respondents before and during data collection. The respondents assured and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. If some respondents do not want to be part of the survey are not included. The aspects of cultural sensitivity, i.e., rituals, celebrations, ceremonies, documenting tribal knowledge and others of the tribal communities were maintained during field surveys.

The study also has limitations. It used qualitative research design and contextual insights. So, findings are also context specific in nature. This cannot be comparable to all tribes or regions. The linguistic barriers and time constraints are again put minor challenges during field surveys.

3. An Exploration from the Field

Intersection of language, culture, and community practices are the rich embroidery of preserving culture heritage. This speaks the history of human civilization, identity, and their narratives. The above preserving culture heritage is a reflection at the foothills of Malyagiri Mountain ranges where multitude of tribes reside. Those tribes are Ho, Munda, Santhal, Juang, Bhuyan, and Sahar. Tribe as such they are heterogenous in character and it speaks of their diversity in many ways i.e., language, worship, culture, dress, food, habits, and their existence. But they always maintain their homogenous nature by accepting things in common. This spirit leads them to community engagement and initiates in them to document and preserve languages while fostering a strong link between ancestral traditions and systems of knowledge.

For two and half years of continuous field study, engrossed in the traditions of various tribes in Odisha. Researcher observed, discussed, and participated in their festivals, such as Nuakhai among the tribal group of Ho, Santhal, Bhuyan, and Juang. It is the festival of western Odisha as well that celebrated with great amusement, it is a major harvest festival among other tribal groups as well seen with Kondh, Sora, and Gadaba tribes (Singh,2012). It is also observed that tribes of these areas celebrate the cattle festival in a yearly basis mostly before the harvesting festival. In this occasion, people arrange cooked foods for animals, and decorate them and put oil on their horns, head, and legs. This kind of celebration also seen among Chaiti Ghoda who involves the worship of horses by the Gond and Paraja tribes (Panda, 2024), Further, Karam Parab is a festival dedicated to the Karam tree by general tribal communities and it is also observed among the Oraon and Munda tribes (Behera, 2017), Bada Osha, again a festival or ritual performed by Santal and other tribes. On this ritual, they fast for the well-being of their brothers. This particular way also seen among the tribes in the field (Pradhan & Goswami, 2024), Maghe Parab (a harvest festival celebrated by the Munda and Santhal tribes), and this also practiced by said field area (Chaudhury, 1978), Pus Parab (a harvest festival of the Khadia tribe) (Patra, 2011), Danda Nacha (a religious dance festival of the Kondh tribes devoted to Goddess Durga) (Majhi, 2024), Sahrul (celebrated by the Oraon tribe to mark the beginning of the agriculture cycle and devoted to Lord Dharmes) (Oram, 2020), Bhado (celebrated by the Bhuiya tribe in honour of their deity 'Baba Peni') (Xalxo, 2018), and Sohrai (a cultural and religious festival of the Santhal tribe during the Kharif crop harvest, dedicated to worshipping cattle) (Harekrushna & Patra, 2023). This exemplifies their tribal identity, culture, and community practices by acknowledging their diversity through exclusive festivals and distinct forms of worship.

The study has detected the distinct livelihoods and occupations of tribal communities, which established them apart from mainstream society; such occupations are slash and burn agriculture, this also known as podu cultivation. The

agriculture set up in tribal livelihood is part and partial in life, this reflects their connection with land and traditional methods of agriculture (Naik et al., 2013). Tribes are also involved in fishing, hunting, and gathering as their part of life. They also collect variety of forest resources regularly such as fruits, roots, leaves, and flowers. These kinds of activities of tribes showcase their deep knowledge of local flora and their sustainable use of natural resources (Smith & Wishnie, 2000).

Apart from their daily activities, they also hold their indigenous medical knowledge for their self-treatment and healing practices. This shows their medical pluralism – means they use multiple sources of medicines and care for their sickness, illness, and diseases. This variation is possible when there is culture heritage preserved, and language is understood as the tribes speak. Among the tribes, there always been contestation of traditional verses modern medicine – as such factor played i.e., accessibility, availability, affordability, cultural beliefs, trust, assurance, and effectiveness – these find place for traditional rather than modern medicine in the tribal communities (Bhasin, 2002). This methods of understanding about medicine, health, and community – simply talks about their understanding of medical plants, herbs, roots, leaves, fruits, and others. Even, it is not that they go for traditional alone, they also go with modern medicine – it is the situation that demands them where to go and use it. So, it can be said they follow the holistic healing approaches from generations.

The tribes believe learning through practical experience is their motto. The young children observe and mimic their parents. This helps children to captivate skills and knowledge for their future roles. The youth dormitories in tribal communities is a platform in which youth learn and relearn many things. Dormitories are used for multiple purposes. Unlikely, this has not been seen among mainstream society except among tribes. This system preserves traditional culture, language, and community practices for future generations as holistic education (Bagai & Nundy, 2009).

In tribes, all marriages are customarily done within their caste and clan group. They obey and follow the established marriage rules. The rules are based on their cultural and social norms – pointing out their unity and continuity as community. As the modern education and exposed to modern and western influence – they are shifted their traditional pattern (Fortes, 1962). Nowadays, younger generations are getting married outside of their caste and clan group, these show the changing patterns of behavior of youth, their attitude towards their customs and traditions, and adaptations of western social change. But they always keep up some of the elements of cultural identity and heritage during their marriage and ritual ceremonies.

Tribes love communal activities as their practices. They do all works collectively – it means their unity, belongingness, and shared identity (Pattanaik, 2021). Even, they do their dining, feasts, rituals, ceremonies, and different festivals in common. Some of the tribes practice their hunting, gathering, and fishing as integral part of their social life. The above activities fulfil their practical needs and want. That is the platform for them to showcase their emotional bonds and cultural unity (Behera, 2019). The traditional knowledge system delivers healing practices, treatment, and cure for them. So, as the physical, spiritual, psychological, emotional well-being, and

community ties are also maintained through healing, curing, and treating. The collective experience of tribes again keeps up the values and ethos, cultural norms, and others for generation to come. By actively participating in tribes, they safeguard and celebrate their traditions and customs despite modern impacts. Consequently, these serve their cultural livelihood.

4. Results and Discussion: In-depth Analysis of Cultural Heritage Preservation

The study meticulously analyses and systematically describes the notes on how a local tribal communities can be protected, safeguarded, and preserved of their language, culture, community practices. The study has shown several points via integration of knowledge production with examples, such as -

4.1 Oral Tradition: -

Oral tradition is one of the instruments through which tribe can transmit their story, folklore, songs, and others from present generation to future generation. As the study was engaged with semi-structured interview and group discussion with the tribes especially elderly women and men, - and it was said by them that their story, song, folklore, and others are yet to capture with written tradition for future generation, these are still in oral forms. Most of the stories, rituals and songs are preserved only through oral tradition from one generation to another. In this process, only the elders play a key important role in keeping up oral tradition lively by sharing their untold proverbs, chants, storytelling and cultural values and other historical knowledge. These kinds of oral traditions are encompassed with tribal dialects, emotions, and sentiments (Mohanty, 2013).

Further, to continue ancient practices of the modern world, modern methods and procedures are applied. Today, many tribes have come up because of education, they are discussing and debating on human rights, policies, injustice done to them, exploited different ways, displaced from their land, and others – so, they had adapted different media platform such as Instagram, Twitter (X), Facebook, YouTube, Webex, Google Meet, Zoom and others to discuss their stories and cultural narratives and reclaiming it further (Al-Hail et al., 2023). There are multiple examples, like storytelling and narratives that are discussed and conducted via video calls or live streams in public forum in mass that allow them to in touch with real time interaction and engagement of the topic and enhance their knowledge, language, culture, and community practices. They also do different kinds of blogging and vlogging to popularize their customs, dance, songs, and stories.

There are several Youtuber who document and preserve tribal culture, such channels are Slice-Ethnic Documentaries, Plan Doc-Authentic Tribal documentaries, BBC Earth, and New Atlantic and others. These documents provide rich visual content for tribes and their life and cultural heritage. These kinds of platforms provide international audience and provide tribal culture and practices (Zhang, 2024).

Facebook is another platform used by tribes to narrate and discuss their culture (Miller, 2011). There are multiple pages used such as Indian tribe food, Kudukh Aalar, Indian Kudukh Boys, Tribekart, and Adivasi People and Indian Politics and others. These pages present, sensitize, and provide different content on tribal cuisine, rights, social movements, and other aspects of tribal life. They disseminate information in the form of videos, audio recordings, and written form. These digital paces have created marvelous help for them to ensure language, culture, and community practices. Hence, these subaltern tribal voices and traditions are continued to be heard and appreciated by many (Fish, 2011).

The explained and narrated above are from Juang, Bhuyan, Ho, Santhal, and Munda tribes present in the foothills of Malyagiri Mountain ranges. It was observed in them with different cultures, language, tradition, customs, and others from the field. Further, their village life, worships, and celebration are unique and exciting to see; these only transmitted in oral form with women, men and young youth with their songs, dance, gossip, community gathering, learning musical instruments, playing tribal games.

4.2 Diverse Ritual Cultures and Ceremonies: -

In tribal society language plays an important role. It helps them in their daily life, different events, rituals, ceremonies, and religious practices. It binds them together in conversation and communication. The integration of language is functional as well as symbolic in nature. It upholds its cultural values and societal norms in the form of songs, and communication (Dung, 2018). Their rituals and ceremonies always encompass different structural activities in the community. Tribal culture is marked by prayers, songs, and chants. For examples – Santhals, Juang, Bhuyan, Ho, and Munda tribes who have different rituals, cultures, and ceremonies for making childhood and adulthood more exciting and energetic in life. This is also seen in many African tribes as well. As they participate in it by reciting prayers and chants in their own native languages – this articulates their community values and expectation (Kyallo, 2013). In several part of Odisha and specifically in the field, it is observed plenty of narratives and folklore that strengthen and enrich their culture, language, and community practices. There are some other instances in international level as well, like Maasai of Kenya who celebrates the ceremonies for circumcision. In this events local Maasai language is used chants and songs. This celebration marks the bravery and transition of youth. So, the ultimate truth is to preserve the ceremonies and help grow language, culture, and community practices of the people (Laiser, 2013).

Tribes are animists and naturalists, they worship and pray religiously to different animals, plants, and nature. As it interacted with the group of tribes, they narrated about their sacred groves (a religious place of worship for tribe). The groves are commonly protected, and it has religious denotation. They do not hunt and log in this place, it is prohibited and forbidden, it is highly sacred for them. In India, Odisha, and other part of tribes also have similar kinds of sentiments and practices. They involve linguistic elements in religious worship, prayers, chants, and sacred songs. All occasions have their own unique songs, prayers, and chants. These elements

energize them to get blessings, express their gratitude towards their gods, goddess, and deities. They also engrossed with language and culture and add on practices in the process of community and religious rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations (Marini, 2003). These can be extended to worldwide like the Native American mostly Hopi tribe. In them, language plays important role in their religious ceremonies like on their Kachina dances. They conduct these dances to respect and extend invitations to Kachinas. It is spiritual exercise within their belief system (Talamantez, 1982). In study also observed many tribes have their own language and dialects which are used in their dance and songs. As the Hopi language maintains their sacred meanings and instructions to interact with Kachinas (Sekaquaptewa, 2001). These rituals are spiritual practices. These are transmitted to younger generations (Loftin, 2003).

There is also special occasions that include weddings, funerals, and harvest festivals. These incorporate their own language that culturally significance (Etzioni & Bloom, 2004). They use tribal language in their events, and it serves as communal ties and it celebrates shared heritage (Merkel, 2015). The study area also experiences similar kind of occasions among the tribes of Santhal, Ho, Munda, Juang, Bhuyan and others. For example, tribes of Odisha and India also have some kind of traditional ceremonies like the 'seasonal festival' (based on monsoon). Again, for these, they have seasonal series of speeches, songs, and chants. These are mostly delivered in their own dialect or language (Mohapatra, 2013).

Language use in context of everyday life is embedded with rituals, ceremonies, celebrations, festivals, events, worships, and others. It ensures and provides vibrant community practices, and it celebrates its identity (Joseph, 2004). After all, these integrate with language, culture, and community practices and intersect with diverse rituals, ceremonies, and religious practices. These serve multiple purposes in tribal societies. It preserves and transmits multitude of cultural values, communal bonds, and it ensures continued significance of it.

4.3 Community Interaction: -

Community interaction is a part of tribal life, without which life is meaningless and useless. They love to interact in their everyday life. The pattern of interaction with tribes includes eating together, working together, conversation with nature, greetings in all paces from younger to older to mark as respect, discussion if some problem and issues must be solved commonly, and other verbal communication are regularly seen among them (Gumperz, 1964). The reinforced language is used to strengthen or support it. In this context, it means that the constant use of the language in daily communication helps to keep it strong, relevant, and actively used among the community members. For example, in a small village of Santhal or Oraon community where everyone speaks a local dialect, daily interactions—like chatting about the weather, discussing local events, or making plans for the day—are all conducted in that dialect (common language that is Saadri) (Kazi & Islam, 2022). This continuous use ensures that the dialect remains a living part of daily life and is passed down to younger generations.

Conversations, trade, and communal activities were conducted in the local language among tribes; to explain this, it refers to informal discussions and exchanges between tribal people (Schieffelin, 1990). Trade involves the exchange of goods and services, and here, it implies that business dealings and transactions are conducted in the local language in the village market (weekly rural markets known as *hatto* or *bazaro* in Odia) (Tiwari & Sahu, 2024). They also have communal activities, which are shared activities that involve the whole community, such as festivals, meetings, or collaborative projects (Derrett, 2003). For example, in a region where a specific language is spoken, people use it in various aspects of their lives; to illustrate it more, sellers and buyers negotiate prices and discuss products in their local language during market transactions. Similarly, the local language is used for announcements, instructions, and casual conversations at community events like festivals or town hall (youth dormitories/akhara) meetings.

"Ensuring its continual use and relevance in daily life." Let us see with an explanation, 'Continual Use' refers to the ongoing, persistent use of the language over time. Hence, it also indicates that the language remains significant and useful in contemporary contexts and is not merely a historical or ceremonial relic (Limayem et al., 2007). For example, in the same village, the practice of using the local dialect for everyday activities, business, and social events helps maintain its relevance. For instance, if local media (like radio or newspapers) and education (like schools) use the local language, it further embeds the language in the community's daily routine and ensures that it is not forgotten or displaced by other languages.

4.4 Education and Apprenticeship: -

"Elders and skilled members of the tribe often took on roles as teachers and mentors," when I say teacher and mentors, they are not employed by the govt. or any agencies, it is by the community and group who are entrusted and given the opportunities to teach looking at their involvement with the community and group or the knowledge and wisdom that they possess; to illustrate it more accurately, it is the elders and skilled members who are typically older and more experienced (Rouvier, 2017). In many traditional societies, elders are respected for their wisdom and experience, while skilled members are those with expertise or knowledge in specific areas. Again, roles as teachers and mentors who are elders and skilled individuals often have the responsibility of guiding and instructing younger members of the tribe. This includes formal and informal teaching as well as providing personal guidance and support. For example, in many Indigenous cultures, elders are revered for their deep knowledge of traditional practices and languages, in the tribes of Odisha, especially the Kurukh language, elders might teach young people how to perform traditional dances, tell stories, or use the Kurukh and Saadri language. Similarly, a skilled hunter tribe might mentor young males in tracking, hunting techniques, and survival skills.

"Imparting language skills and cultural knowledge to younger generations" is another point. This refers to teaching younger members how to speak and understand the language spoken by the tribe. Teaching young includes grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and use of language in diverse contexts. This teaching

again helps in keeping their customs, values, traditions, and practices. These are the part of tribal identity (Cakir, 2006). The tribal knowledge includes different rituals, folklore, ceremonies, and others. For instances, in field and in Odisha – there it is observed all tribes like Santhal, Munda, and Ho are practicing their teaching from their elders traditional. The elders used to teach young children about their traditional songs, their local dialect, folklore, and stories. This kind of process ensures cultural heritage of tribes. This also seen in other part of the country in India and abroad where traditional arts and crafts are well-known. For example, in Japan, tea ceremony is taught by skilled practitioners to younger one. This helps preserve skill and cultural context (Kobayashi, 1984).

In the process teaching and knowledge enhancement –apprenticeships and informal education play an important role in tribal youth. For which language is used for communication purposes, systematic teaching learning process, training the untrained tribal youth. By which practical skills and knowledge are gained (Panda, 2020). This teaching takes place by hand on learning, then slowly youth are trained, later they are involved in complex tasks. The informal education is learning outside of formal classroom setting, it takes place through participation, observation, and other less structured methods. For example, these kinds of practices are seen among many Santhali tribal communities in the field. This can be also replicated with Odisha where traditional craft are practiced. Young apprentices try to learn weaving, pottery and working with skilled artisans as well (Mello, 2018). Through apprenticeship and informal education tribal youth observe techniques, learn practice skills, and take up more responsibilities. The informal teaching also may be included, like learning cultural stories and traditions of society by closely listening to elders during the common gatherings and participation in ceremonies.

4.5 Language in Arts and Crafts: -

The question of language preservation is achieved by its integration with arts and crafts (Garada, 2012). The language preservation of arts and crafts are narrated such as – firstly, it is the symbol and writing pattern used for integration among tribes (Singh, 2021). In this study, it was seen many of the tribes in their house wall different kinds of arts and crafts were made, indicating their rich culture, language, and community practice. The tribes mostly Santhal, Ho, and Munda use their house wall painted and decorated with animals, plants, flowers, and some kinds of deities, goddesses, and gods. As is also seen in Odisha, some of the traditional temples are painted, decorated, and carvings like Jagannath Temple. This indicates symbolic designs where religious and cultural aspects are narrated and conveyed to the people. Every motif and inscription in the temples signify meanings and contribute rich culture, language and practices, stories, beliefs, and ethos of society (Starza, 1993). In international context, it is seen like Mayan civilization where complex hieroglyphic writing, sophisticated mathematics, astronomy, and monumental architecture are found. These elements show their decorative system with rich culture, language, and practices (Calvin, 2006).

Secondly, it is the pattern and designs used by tribes in their houses and walls. These represent their diverse culture, traditional patterns of arts and crafts, and designs

were used in textiles, carvings, and pottery. These all highlights the tribal culture, language, and their practice (Schneider, 1987). To illustrate it more, in Odisha and specifically in field where it was observed, many tribes are following the pattern and designs in their house and wall; such tribe is Saora who used geometric pattern in their artwork and textiles. They patent their paintings as Saora paintings. They design in a decorative way where their cultural narratives are encoded, their clan symbols are in scripted, historical events are narrated in a pattern and design. By this, Saora tribe keep their tradition, preserve and communicate their language (Sharma, 2015).

Thirdly, arts and crafts are reflected on oral traditions that passed on to their generation (Mohanty, 2013). For instance, it is observed during the study in the field that most of the tribes have their own costume like saari, gamucha, and others. These are found among the tribes of Ho, Santhal, Munda, and others tribe. Their clothes are crafted and art. Similar way, it is observed among the regions wise like Sambalpur district of Odisha famous for its Sambalpuri ikat textiles. This showcases elucidated patterns with color combination of Sambalpuri Saari, that show its cultural meanings and narratives. Every design holds local mythology, history, social, cultural, and religious significance in it. These patterns serve the visual art form of the regional, local, tribal and preserve their cultural heritage (Tyagi, 2008).

Fourthly, in tribal society ceremonial artifacts are very important, it relates with their cultures. All tribes have their ceremonial artifacts like totems, masks, and ritual objects in a symbolic design. These convey their linguistic and cultural information of the tribes (Pattanaik, 2003). In field, it is observed that many Santhal, Ho, and Munda tribal women have made traditional tattoo on their face and forehead signifying their tribal identity, decorative purposes, and marital status. In tribes it is also known as Khodna or Godna. Same wise in Odisha also have traditional Pattachitra paintings marking the vibrant tradition of mythological stories, cultural tradition, and religious narratives. These intricate work of tribes make alive on language, culture, and community practices (Suresh, 2017).

Fifthly, it is the cultural continuity of tribes that highlights their modernity when they are integrated with the mainstream society. The language and art play important role in preserving their cultural heritage (Satpathy, 2015). In contemporary times, to keep up the indigenous art and craft Govt. and different organization are organized different kinds of mela and show to showcase tribal art, literature, craft, and artifacts. This kind of program helps revitalize and sustain in modern era.

4.6 Storytelling and Epics: -

In tribal society, storytelling, and epics play an important role in their socio-cultural, language, and community practices. Afterall, it is the narratives and mythologies that have been preserved by tribal community for so long. These narratives are repeatedly narrated and performed by storytellers. Hence, these maintain the complex linguist, culture, and community fellow feelings of the tribes. All tribes have their own storytelling and epics – from their history, origin, and growth as

community. As on study Juang older man narrated -they have come all the way from Gonasika Hills, that was their origin, they migrated later to Malyagiri Hills of the above part, then slowly they have move down to foothills of it. Similar way Sathals and Hos explained that they have come from Jharkhand, Chaibasa regions and settled down here in foothills of Malyagiri mountain. These narratives of their origin, history, and growth explicitly talk about their identity, practices, culture, dance, music, and tradition. As it is also seen in the tradition of epic poetry and oral narratives in Odisha where Mahabharata and Ramayana are recited diverse way in different regions. From those epics, it talks about culture, tales of heroes, deities, and moral lessons of Odisha. Conventionally, these epics were orally transmitted by diverse storytellers and priests, and it is documented (Paul, 2023).

The second mythological narrative and community identity in Hindu epics are Ramayana and Mahabharata. These tells about Hindu culture. In Mahabharata, it is narrated about Kurukshetra war where Kaurava and Pandava fates are explained. But in Ramayana, it is Prince Rama, his wife Sita, his brother Laxman, and their problem with Ravana (Narayan, 2000). These epics are told and recited by many priests in religious and social gatherings.

4.7 Naming Conventions: -

In tribal society, traditional naming practices are celebrated warmly following their rituals and ceremonies. These practices include how names are chosen or given to children/people, places, and objects in a culture. This kind of ritual holds deep cultural significance and provides cultural tie up with language (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009). This can be explained i.e., naming of children or people that holds meaning from cultural values, significant events, and family lineage and heritage. The tribes, whatever the title in their name, hold the significance of totems. The totems can be of plants, animals, birds, flowers, and others. This is a universal practice among the tribes, in Odisha also it can be reflected with the tribal communities. The names are chosen in significant events according to the parents' wish and desire for their child. The Saora tribe demonstrates their personal characteristics and familial ties; a Saora name i.e., rati means joy. This signifies their identity of the individual as well as their cultural values, and community expectation. These show their deep tribal traditions and spiritual beliefs (Nayak, 2014).

Further, place names like Odisha determine its geographical features, cultural practices, historical narratives of the local tribes (Das, 1989). Similarly, Malyagiri is a place name that holds the meaning of mountain. There are others names like in Gajapati district, the name 'Taptapani' means to 'hot water',. This mentions the part's natural hot springs. These are both culturally and historically significant to the local tribes. This helps maintain and preserve tribal knowledge and shows connection between people and their environment.

Sometimes, it is assigned to important objects that hold cultural importance. There are tribes who are closely connected with ceremonial artifacts. The artifacts are reflected through their name denoting their purpose, stories, and origin. Santhal, Ho,

Munda, and other tribes hold their ceremonial artifacts and that are cultural importance to them. Similarly, Dongria Kondh tribe which denotes as 'Dhokra' means 'metalwork art.' This is named after the traditional lost-wax casting technique. This creates elaborate figurines and jewellery (Hacker, 1993). Every piece transmits symbolic designs to it. This also conveys spiritual beliefs and ancestral stories. Hence, it is process of preserving cultural heritage in the means of craftsmanship and symbolism.

4.8 Traditional Knowledge:

Every dialect and language of tribes help in transmission of knowledge about animals, plants, fruits, roots, leaves, and environment (Hunn, 1993). This transmission allows people to understand, comprehend, safeguard, and perpetuate the environment and cultural traditions. During the study, it was observed that many tribes fall ill, sick, or any kind of disease. They first go to their trusted and assured traditional healers (Gunia, or Vaidya), if they cannot treat or heal them, later they go for allopathic medicine, and again if they are not well by that, they visit some other system of medicine. In the process, they show their medical pluralism. They even try their home remedies. In study area and specially in Odisha tribes speak different languages, they speak of their own dialects like Santhali, Ho, Munda, and Kui, - it means all tribes have their own dialects and in addition they have their regional language like Odia. By this language and dialect, they have extensive knowledge on different local plants and species that are conveyed by their language to their next generation. The tribes are also expertise with names of plants, their uses, properties, and their significance (Mishra, 2017). For example, Odia language or any other languages provide name of several medicinal and edible plants, i.e., haladi' (turmeric) and "Ada" (ginger) are identified by their names and are associated with cultural practices and medicinal uses.

In other cultures, languages provide details about the local animals and species. This helps to understand the detailed terms related to local animals and species. This helps us understand ecological roles and interactions (Saxena, 2020). There are also fishing terms in coastal parts of Odisha for diverse types of fish and marine creatures. In case of, the term "Hilsa" (Ilish) denotes to explicit type of fish in Odia cuisine and their culture. Local fishermen also used terms to label fish species that aids in fishing practices and sustainability.

Further, knowledge about the environment is looked at from different perspective of language and elaborate on their environmental patterns and their unique phenomena (Garner, 2004). The Odia language and tribal dialects used terms related to their local environment in their ecological and seasonal patterns. For example, in rural Odisha and specifically in tribal regions rice cultivation is said as 'Ghada' means seedling stage and 'Jau' means ripened paddy. The more knowledgeable farmers, they control their agricultural activities, looking at the seasonal change in the environment. As they used to say in Odia 'Barsha' means rain, 'Grishma' means summer. By doing this, they understand and plan their agriculture.

5. Conclusion

The scholarly study has prepared the remarks and results in a thematical manner. This study brings out the major patterns followed by diverse tribal communities which can be reflected with others too. But not as it is seen among the tribes of Malyagiri mountain range. They are unique, since this region is yet to industrialized, urbanized, and globalized. They are less influenced by western and mainstream society. By the study, it was noticed and observed – that can be an instrument and mechanism for sustaining as well as intersecting of language, culture, and community practices in the field. It helps preserved culture heritage and lessons for other tribal communities and mainstream as well.

Firstly, it is the continuity of culture and linguistic practice among tribal communities. The tribes are the saviors of culture and language practices – they preserve and protect their own language by constant interaction with their local dialects. As some of the tribal youths who are gone out for the purpose of education and job – they are slowly forgetting their local dialects, but when they are in touch with the community – their language, culture, and traditions are always alive. They can keep up their rituals, festivals, celebrations, ceremonies, oral narratives, customary laws, and others. The everyday communication of tribes can ensure cultural identity. Despite, they are in external pressure, they prove to have their traditions and culture.

Secondly, it is the impact of globalization and its structural changes in society that affect tribes. Hence, urbanization, industrialization and modernization process have given different positions of tribal languages and culture. These have created endangered for them, and they are vulnerable and helpless. Further, there is growing shift from intensity of interaction with dominant linguistic groups and socio-cultural transformation of tribes in the language line. This kind of change creates problems and issues for tribes. The intergenerational transmission of tribal knowledge and culture values slowly deteriorates.

Thirdly, it is among the tribes that in-depth intergenerational knowledge transmission is seen with them. This is a unique result of the study, and it highlights their criticality and analyses the role of elders who are the custodian of it. They help to transmit linguistic and cultural knowledge, such transmission are – folk songs, rituals, ceremonial procedures, festivals, celebrations, storytelling, and informal learning. These appeared to be significant parts of intersection of language, culture, and community practice in preservation aspects. They have also youth-oriented programs that support their long year earning traditional knowledge to bring forth at contemporary contexts.

Fourthly, it is also found that among the tribes -community led preservation initiative much deeper than other non-tribes. They have strong community strategies to have every work done in common. They also organize cultural camps, dance, songs, football and hockey matches, and others. These are the pride for them and by which they retain their culture, language, collective rights, and others.

Community participation is most priority for them that is inseparable to their sustainability efforts.

Fifthly, it is the role of digital technologies used by tribes. This has transformed and developed their cultural and linguistic part. They also slowly create different online repositories, digital archives, and collaborative platforms to boost their local culture, language, and community practices. Further, they are in use of social media, and digital storytelling as mediums to spread tribal language, and culture. They have broken boundaries, and they also encouraged their young generation to spread awareness about their cultural diversity.

Sixthly, it is unique to tribal society i.e., sacred grove – a religious and worship pattern found among the tribe. This is an animist, and naturalist method of worship – believing that nature, earth, and environment will protect them in their life. So, tribes do not harm, hurt, and cut the plants, roots, leaves, and herbs from the place of sacred grove. They keep the place prohibited and forbidden to enter and make unholy. If they do so, gods, goddesses, and deities will be displeased and bring different kind of ills, diseases, and sickness to them.

Seventhly, tribes always protect their environment. They do not have any kind of interests with regards to profit by selling and buying the natural resources available to them like land, water, and forest. Instead, they protect, safeguard, and keep it for future generations. But with the mainstream society, it is seen mostly profit orientation by using these natural resources. Tribes always use what they need and want according to their need, not as greedy.

Eighthly, for tribes there are persistent challenges despite positive initiatives by Government, NGOs, and other local level. Hence, they are always facing insufficiency of funds, weak support from institutional level, and fast changing pace in their locality. These kinds of restraints make their growth, progress, and mobility very slow. Thus, they face hinder and delay in their long-term preservation efforts, and it requires strong policy implementation and constant government support and commitment.

Lastly, tribes have put their implication in a robust manner with respect to their community wellbeing and intersectionality of culture, language, and community practices. As it is discussion and analyzed that Malyagir regions have adapted the cultural preservation approach – it is possible because modernization and westernization have not entered yet. The study, hence, offers criticality of intersectionality of language, culture, and community practices of tribes. This can be thought of for educators, researchers, and policymakers. The study also highly recommends that while studying a tribal community – they should use culturally grounded theory, intersectionality, ethnomethodological approach methods or community empowered methods to look for preservation of language, cultural, and practices of tribal society and across tribes of Odisha, and India as well.

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