

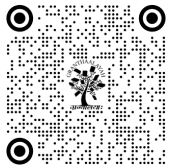


EXPLORING THE RICH TAPESTRY OF ART AND CULTURE: THE TRADITIONAL ARTS AND CRAFTS OF THE DIDAYI TRIBE IN MALKANGIRI DISTRICT, ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into the vibrant and diverse artistic heritage of the Didayi tribe, an indigenous community residing in Malkangiri District, Odisha, India. It explores the rich tapestry of traditional arts and crafts that define the cultural landscape of this unique tribe. From the intricate painting techniques that capture their mythological and everyday life, to the detailed craftsmanship in weaving, pottery, and bamboo work, the article provides an in-depth look at the Didayi tribe's artistic practices. Additionally, it examines the significance of music and dance forms in their cultural rituals and community events. By highlighting the influences of the geographical regions of Khairaput, Karukonda, and Chitrakonda, the article illustrates how these factors shape and preserve the Didayi's artistic expressions. Addressing the challenges faced in maintaining these traditions amidst modernization and globalization, it also underscores the ongoing efforts to preserve and promote this invaluable cultural heritage. Through this exploration, the article aims to foster a deeper appreciation for the Didayi tribe's rich artistic legacy and the importance of cultural preservation.

Keywords: Art, Culture, Crafts, Traditional, Didayi, Malkangiri, Odisha

1. INTRODUCTION

The Didayi tribe, one of the lesser-known indigenous communities of India, resides primarily in the hilly terrains and forested areas of Malkangiri District in Odisha. Their way of life is closely tied to the land they inhabit, with their customs, beliefs, and traditions reflecting a deep connection to nature. The Didayi are an integral part of the cultural mosaic of the region, contributing to its rich diversity through their unique language, rituals, and social structures. Their traditional arts and crafts are a vivid expression of their cultural identity, with practices such as weaving, pottery, and intricate basketry showcasing the tribe's skill, creativity, and intimate knowledge of their natural surroundings. These crafts not only serve practical purposes in their daily lives but also hold cultural and symbolic significance, representing their collective memory and worldview. The Didayi's traditional art forms embody the essence of their history and help preserve their distinct identity in the face of external influences.¹

However, in an age where modernization and globalization are rapidly reshaping indigenous communities, the preservation of the Didayi's traditional arts and crafts has become a pressing concern. As younger generations migrate toward urban centers in search of education and employment, the transmission of these skills from elders to the youth is increasingly threatened. Preserving these crafts is crucial not only for maintaining the cultural identity of the Didayi but also for promoting economic sustainability within the tribe. Handcrafted items can offer the Didayi tribe a source of income, especially through the promotion of eco-tourism and cultural tourism. Furthermore, safeguarding these artistic traditions helps to enrich the cultural diversity of the region, contributing to a broader understanding and appreciation of India's indigenous heritage. Through concerted efforts to protect and promote the traditional arts and crafts of the Didayi, we can ensure that this valuable cultural legacy continues to thrive in the Malkangiri District, serving as both a testament to the tribe's resilience and a reminder of the importance of cultural diversity in our global society.² Figure 1 below shows a Didayi family in a plain wearing their traditional attire during a festival. Which represents a Didayi tribe.



Figure No.1: A family of the Didayi tribe wearing their traditional clothes from Oringi village.

2. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Didayi tribe, one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of India, has historically inhabited the remote, hilly regions of Malkangiri District in Odisha. Their origins are deeply intertwined with the forests and hills they call home, where they have practiced subsistence agriculture, hunting, and gathering for centuries. The Didayi's social structure is patriarchal, and their religious beliefs are rooted in animism, with a deep reverence for the natural world. Isolated from mainstream society for much of their history, the tribe maintained a distinct cultural identity through their unique language, customs, and traditional arts and crafts. However, with the advent of modern development in the post-independence era, the Didayi have faced increasing challenges, including displacement, cultural erosion, and loss of access to natural resources. Despite these pressures, their traditional crafts remain a vital link to their past, reflecting the rich cultural tapestry that defines the tribe.³

The traditional arts and crafts of the Didayi tribe hold profound cultural significance, serving as both functional and symbolic elements of their daily life. These crafts, including weaving, pottery, and basketry, are not merely utilitarian but are deeply embedded in the tribe's spiritual and social practices. Crafted from locally sourced materials, such as bamboo and clay, these items reflect the Didayi's intimate relationship with nature and their environment. The patterns and designs they create are often passed down through generations, symbolizing their ancestral heritage and communal identity. Arts and crafts also play a vital role in rituals, festivals, and social gatherings, with handmade items used in ceremonial contexts, reinforcing the tribe's connection to their traditions and reinforcing their cultural resilience amidst external changes. These artistic expressions act as a bridge between the Didayi's past and present, preserving their rich cultural legacy while fulfilling essential roles in their everyday lives.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

- To document and preserve the traditional arts and crafts of the Didayi tribe in Malkangiri District, ensuring that their unique cultural practices and ancestral knowledge are safeguarded for future generations.

- To promote awareness and appreciation of the Didayi tribe's rich cultural heritage, highlighting the significance of their arts and crafts in both local and global contexts to foster greater cultural inclusivity and understanding.
- To explore the role of traditional crafts in the socio-economic development of the Didayi community, emphasizing the potential for sustainable livelihoods through the promotion of their handmade products in cultural tourism and artisanal markets.
- To examine the impact of modernization on the Didayi tribe's traditional practices, identifying challenges to their cultural preservation and proposing strategies for the revitalization and transmission of their artistic traditions in contemporary society.

4. METHOD OF THE STUDIED

The study on the traditional arts and crafts of the Didayi tribe in Malkangiri District, Odisha, was conducted using a combination of qualitative research methods to provide an in-depth understanding of the cultural significance of their practices. Ethnographic fieldwork was a key approach, involving direct observation and interaction with the Didayi community in their natural environment. Researchers spent time in the villages, observing daily activities, rituals, and artistic practices to document the processes involved in their traditional crafts, such as weaving, pottery, and basketry.

Interviews and oral history techniques were employed to gather firsthand accounts from artisans, elders, and community members. These interviews provided valuable insights into the symbolic meanings behind the crafts, the transmission of knowledge across generations, and the impact of modernization on these practices. Participant observation was another critical method, where researchers engaged in the craft-making processes alongside the Didayi artisans to gain a deeper, experiential understanding of the skills and materials involved. Additionally, the study incorporated archival research to review existing literature, government reports, and historical accounts of the Didayi tribe, which helped frame the historical and cultural context of their art forms. Photographic documentation and video recordings were also used to capture the intricate details of the crafts, ensuring visual representation of the techniques, patterns, and materials used. This multi-method approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the rich tapestry of Didayi art and culture, blending observational, participatory, and historical perspectives.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Panda, S. (2012), "Cultural Practices and Crafts of Odisha's Tribal Communities". Panda's study delves into the diverse cultural practices of Odisha's tribal groups, emphasizing the role of traditional crafts in sustaining tribal identity. He highlights how these crafts are integral to daily life, serving both functional and symbolic purposes. The research underscores the threat posed by modernization to these traditions, particularly in lesser-known tribes like the Didayi. Panda advocates for the urgent documentation of these arts to preserve their cultural significance. His findings resonate with the focus on preserving the Didayi's crafts for future generations.

Mohanty, R. (2015), "Artisans of the Forest: Indigenous Craftsmanship in Odisha". Mohanty's work explores the craftsmanship of Odisha's tribal artisans, focusing on their deep connection with nature. The study provides detailed descriptions of the materials used in craft-making, such as bamboo, clay, and leaves, which are also central to the Didayi tribe's practices. Mohanty emphasizes the ecological sustainability inherent in these traditional arts. His research aligns with the discussion on how the Didayi tribe's crafts reflect their relationship with the natural environment. Mohanty also explores the potential for these crafts to generate economic benefits through eco-friendly markets.

Patnaik, D. (2016), "The Role of Traditional Crafts in Tribal Economies". Patnaik focuses on the economic aspects of tribal arts and crafts, arguing that these traditional practices can offer sustainable livelihoods. He explores how crafts like weaving and basketry, common among the Didayi, can be leveraged for cultural tourism and artisanal trade. Patnaik discusses the potential for these arts to bridge the gap between cultural preservation and economic development. His study highlights the importance of supporting tribal communities through skill development and market access. This work aligns with the objective of promoting the Didayi tribe's crafts for both cultural preservation and economic upliftment.

Sahu, L. (2018), "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Artisanal Practices". Sahu's research emphasizes the value of indigenous knowledge systems in maintaining and transmitting traditional craft

skills. The study explores how these knowledge systems are passed down through generations, a process that is vital to the survival of Didayi arts and crafts. Sahu notes that modernization poses a threat to the continuity of these practices as younger generations migrate to urban areas. The research advocates for documenting these crafts and integrating them into modern education systems to ensure their survival. This work mirrors the current focus on the transmission of craft knowledge within the Didayi tribe.

Behera, A. (2013), *"The Intersection of Modernization and Tribal Craft in Odisha"*. Behera explores how modernization has impacted the tribal crafts of Odisha, including the Didayi. The study highlights how external influences and shifting socio-economic conditions have led to a decline in traditional craft-making. Behera suggests that while modernization brings opportunities, it also erodes cultural practices by promoting urban migration and industrialization. He calls for a balanced approach, where traditional crafts are adapted to contemporary needs while retaining their cultural essence. This study is relevant to the challenges faced by the Didayi tribe in preserving their crafts amidst modern pressures.

Rout, S. (2014), *"Ethnographic Insights into Odisha's Tribal Life"*. Rout's ethnographic study provides a detailed examination of the cultural and social lives of Odisha's tribal communities, including the Didayi. The research focuses on how traditional arts and crafts are woven into daily life, with a particular emphasis on the role of women in craft-making. Rout highlights the symbolic meanings attached to these crafts, particularly in rituals and ceremonies. The study underscores the importance of these crafts in reinforcing social bonds and community identity. This ethnographic perspective complements the current exploration of the cultural significance of Didayi crafts.

Singh, B. (2017), *"Art and Identity: A Study of Indian Tribal Communities"*. Singh's research examines how art forms serve as a critical expression of identity for India's tribal communities. The study highlights the symbolic nature of traditional crafts, particularly in tribes like the Didayi, where art is intertwined with cultural beliefs and practices. Singh argues that tribal art is not just a medium of self-expression but a way of preserving history and transmitting cultural values. His work aligns with the idea that the Didayi's crafts are more than functional—they are deeply tied to the tribe's heritage and collective identity. The study also discusses the role of external pressures in transforming tribal art.

Chakraborty, K. (2019), *"Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Case of Tribal Arts"*. Chakraborty focuses on the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, specifically in the context of tribal art forms. The study discusses the challenges faced by tribal communities, including the Didayi, in preserving their artistic traditions amidst globalization and modernization. Chakraborty suggests that integrating these crafts into national and global platforms can help sustain them while promoting cultural diversity. The research also highlights the importance of government and non-governmental support in preserving these traditions. This study aligns with the focus on safeguarding the Didayi tribe's arts for future generations.

Nayak, J. (2011), *"The Impact of Globalization on Tribal Communities in Eastern India"*. Nayak explores the socio-cultural and economic impact of globalization on tribal communities, including the Didayi. The study notes that globalization has led to a shift in traditional livelihoods, pushing many tribes away from their cultural practices, including craft-making. Nayak discusses how this shift has resulted in the erosion of traditional knowledge and a weakening of community bonds. He argues for the need to create frameworks that allow tribal communities to retain their crafts while benefiting from globalization. This research provides insight into the challenges faced by the Didayi tribe in maintaining their cultural traditions in the modern world.

Das, M. (2020), *"Cultural Resilience in Indigenous Communities: A Case Study of Odisha's Tribes"*. Das's study focuses on the concept of cultural resilience, exploring how tribal communities in Odisha, such as the Didayi, maintain their cultural practices despite external pressures. The research highlights how traditional crafts play a crucial role in sustaining cultural identity, even as modernization influences younger generations. Das advocates for cultural programs that encourage the revival and continuation of these traditions, particularly in the face of socio-economic changes. The study aligns with the exploration of how the Didayi tribe's traditional crafts contribute to their cultural resilience and identity preservation.

6. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

6.1. TRADITIONAL PAINTING TECHNIQUES

The Didayi tribe's traditional painting techniques are closely tied to their environment and culture, using natural materials like clay, charcoal, plant-based dyes, and mineral pigments. These materials are ground into fine powders and mixed with water or organic binders to create earthy hues, reflecting their surroundings. Using simple tools such as twigs, animal-hair brushes, or even fingers, Didayi artists paint freehand, creating flowing, organic designs that depict geometric patterns, animals, and daily life. Often a communal effort, particularly among women, these paintings are not only artistic expressions but also serve ceremonial purposes during festivals and rituals, invoking protection and prosperity.⁴ Every Didayi tribe paints 'Chita' by mixing coal lumps, rice husks, yellow clay, red clay, vermilion etc. while worshipping in their festivals. It is shown in figure 2 that 'Chitra' is worshiped by placing the things brought for worship.



Figure No.2: Chita made during Giya Pande festival in Muduliguda village.

6.2. DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONAL PAINTING STYLES UNIQUE TO THE DIDAYI TRIBE.

The Didayi tribe's traditional painting styles are deeply embedded in their cultural beliefs and connection to nature, reflecting a close relationship with their environment and spiritual worldview. Unlike formalized tribal art in other regions, Didayi paintings are spontaneous, made using natural materials like clay, charcoal, plant extracts, and mineral pigments. The walls of their homes serve as canvases, especially during festivals and religious ceremonies, transforming these spaces into vibrant expressions of cultural identity. The themes of Didayi paintings revolve around nature, wildlife, and tribal mythology. Motifs such as animals, trees, birds, and rivers emphasize the interconnectedness of life, while geometric patterns and simple human figures carry symbolic meanings of fertility, protection, and prosperity. The use of earthy tones, particularly reds, browns, and ochres, mirrors the natural surroundings of the tribe. Women in the community primarily practice this art form, passing down techniques and knowledge through generations, ensuring the survival of these unique painting styles.⁵

6.3. THEMES AND MOTIFS COMMONLY FOUND IN DIDAYI PAINTINGS.

The themes and motifs in Didayi paintings reflect their deep connection to nature, spirituality, and communal life. Nature dominates their art, with trees, rivers, animals, birds, and mountains representing the tribe's reverence for the land and its resources. Animals like elephants, deer, and birds are often depicted, symbolizing the tribe's belief in the interconnectedness of all living beings. Tribal mythology is another recurring theme, with human figures shown engaging in daily activities like farming, hunting, or rituals, reflecting the cultural heritage of the Didayi. Geometric patterns, such as circles, spirals, and zigzags, frequently appear in their paintings, symbolizing concepts like fertility, protection, and prosperity.⁶ These patterns, often repetitive and stylized, provide a rhythmic flow to the artwork. Spiritual motifs also hold significant meaning, with sun, moon, and star symbols representing important celestial bodies in Didayi cosmology. Occasionally, anthropomorphic figures of deities or spirit entities are featured, particularly in ceremonial contexts, further emphasizing the tribe's spiritual beliefs and communal identity.

6.4. MATERIALS AND METHODS USED IN THEIR PAINTING PROCESS.

The Didayi tribe's painting techniques rely on locally sourced, natural materials that reflect their deep connection to the environment. They use earth-based pigments like clay, charcoal, ochre, and ash, which are mixed with water or organic binders such as plant sap or rice paste to create vibrant yet earthy tones of red, brown, black, and yellow. These pigments are applied to surfaces like the walls of their homes, rocks, and earthen objects, particularly during festivals or religious ceremonies, emphasizing the cultural and ceremonial significance of their art.⁷ Didayi paintings are often done freehand, without preliminary sketches, showcasing the artists' intuitive and spontaneous skills. Simple tools like twigs, animal hair brushes, and even fingers are used to create detailed patterns, textures, and flowing designs. Women in the community typically lead the painting process, with techniques and symbolic motifs passed down through generations. The act of painting is often a communal and ritualistic activity, with multiple community members collaborating on murals and designs during special occasions, making it an integral part of Didayi cultural identity.

7. CRAFTSMANSHIP AND ARTISANAL SKILLS

The craftsmanship of the Didayi tribe reflects their deep connection to the environment, cultural heritage, and resourcefulness. Skilled in weaving, pottery, basketry, and woodcraft, Didayi artisans use locally sourced materials like bamboo, palm leaves, clay, and wood to create functional and decorative items. Weaving, especially by women, produces intricate textiles and baskets, while pottery is used for storage, cooking, and rituals. Woodcraft, primarily done by men, includes carving tools, totems, and household items, often with geometric or nature-inspired designs. These crafts, both utilitarian and symbolic, preserve cultural identity and provide economic livelihood.

7.1. OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL CRAFTS PRACTICED BY THE DIDAYI TRIBE

The Didayi tribe of Malkangiri District, Odisha, is renowned for its diverse and sustainable traditional crafts, which are integral to their daily life and cultural identity. These crafts, deeply connected to the natural environment, use locally sourced materials such as bamboo, wild grass, palm leaves, and clay. Weaving is one of the most significant crafts, predominantly practiced by women who create intricate baskets, mats, and textiles. These woven items often feature traditional patterns that reflect the tribe's cultural heritage and are passed down through generations. Pottery is another essential craft, where artisans mold locally sourced clay into cooking pots, storage vessels, and ceremonial objects, typically decorated with simple designs using natural pigments. Bamboo and woodcrafts are also significant, with artisans crafting practical items like baskets, tools, furniture, and musical instruments, showcasing the tribe's resourcefulness and connection to nature.⁸ These traditional crafts are not only utilitarian but also serve as a vital link to the Didayi's cultural roots. In picture number 3 below, a Didayi man from the plains is making baskets to support his family. Every Thursday, she sells various kinds of products made of bamboo in the Kudumulugumma village market. He learned basket making from his grandfather and father. Niti has been doing this in her family for four generations. People who make baskets, *Kula*, *Changada*, *Karli*, *Chhatudi* are called *Dora* by Didayis.

7.2. THE ROLE OF CRAFTSMANSHIP IN DIDAYI CULTURE AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACT.

Craftsmanship plays a central role in Didayi culture, serving as both a form of cultural expression and a crucial part of their socio-economic structure. The traditional crafts practiced by the Didayi, such as weaving, pottery, and bamboo and woodwork, are essential to their daily lives, rituals, and festivals, reflecting their close relationship with nature. These crafts are often communal activities, fostering social bonds and ensuring the transfer of knowledge across generations. Women, especially, take the lead in weaving and basketry, while men focus on bamboo and woodcrafts. Economically, these crafts have provided the Didayi with a means of livelihood, as their handcrafted products are traded in local markets. Despite the challenges posed by modernization and industrial goods, there is growing recognition of the need to preserve Didayi craftsmanship. Efforts to promote these traditional skills, coupled with opportunities in cultural tourism and artisanal trade, could enhance the economic impact of Didayi craftsmanship, supporting both cultural preservation and economic sustainability.



Figure No.3: A Didayi old man making the basket.

Internet Sources: senior-man-and-bamboo-craft-lifestyle-of-the-locals-in-india-photo

7.3. TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS USED IN CREATING THESE CRAFTS

The Didayi tribe employs a variety of traditional techniques and simple tools in their craftsmanship, with each craft reflecting their deep connection to nature. Weaving, primarily practiced by women, uses bamboo strips, wild grass, and palm leaves, which are handwoven into baskets, mats, and other functional items. Simple wooden tools are used to cut and split the bamboo into fine, flexible strips, and the process requires meticulous handwork. Pottery is made using locally sourced clay, shaped by hand or with rudimentary tools like wooden paddles and stones. Artisans decorate the pottery using natural pigments, and the items are sun-dried and fired in open pits. Bamboo and woodcraft require different tools, such as knives and chisels, for splitting bamboo and carving wood. Bamboo is woven into intricate shapes, while wood is carved into household items, tools, and decorative pieces, often featuring geometric or nature-inspired designs. These techniques and tools, passed down through generations, enable the Didayi to create functional and culturally significant crafts that reflect their eco-friendly lifestyle and cultural heritage.

8. MUSIC AND DANCE FORMS

Music and dance are central to the cultural identity of the Didayi tribe, deeply embedded in their rituals, celebrations, and communal gatherings. Their music is characterized by the use of handmade instruments, such as drums made from animal hides and bamboo flutes, reflecting their connection to nature. These instruments, played in unison, create rhythmic and melodic soundscapes for their gatherings. Singing, often done in a call-and-response style, accompanies the music, with lyrics passed down orally that speak of nature, folklore, and spiritual beliefs. Dance in Didayi culture is communal, with both men and women participating in circular formations that symbolize unity.⁹ These dances are tied to key events like harvest festivals, weddings, and spiritual ceremonies, where rhythmic movements coordinated with drumbeats are performed barefoot, with dancers adorned in simple, nature-inspired costumes. The dances often carry symbolic meanings, celebrating fertility, honouring deities, or mimicking animals to represent the tribe's close connection to wildlife. Together, the music and dance of the Didayi serve as a powerful means of storytelling, cultural expression, and preserving their rich heritage, reinforcing social bonds and maintaining their unique identity in a changing world.¹⁰

8.1. EXPLORATION OF TRADITIONAL DIDAYI MUSIC, INCLUDING INSTRUMENTS AND VOCAL STYLES.

Traditional Didayi music is deeply intertwined with the tribe's rituals, celebrations, and social life, serving as both entertainment and a vital expression of cultural identity. Crafted from natural materials like wood, bamboo, and animal hide, their instruments reflect a close connection to nature. Drums form the rhythmic backbone, with deep, resonant

beats driving ceremonial dances, while bamboo flutes provide soft, melodic tunes that mimic the sounds of the natural world. Simple string instruments and rattles made from gourds or bells enhance the harmonic and rhythmic layers of the music. Vocals play an essential role, with call-and-response singing fostering communal participation and unity. Themes of nature, tribal folklore, and spirituality are central, often chanted or sung in repetitive, meditative styles to invoke spiritual blessings. Passed down orally, the music preserves Didayi myths and history, creating a powerful, symbolic form of cultural storytelling that reinforces their connection to their heritage and environment.¹¹ In figure number 4, the women of the Didayi tribe of Gangapada village sing together at a wedding. If the people of this tribe celebrate a family festival in the village, then on that night, boys and girls sing together on the floor of the Dhemhsa rhythm.



Figure No.4: Didayis women of Gangapada village sing wedding songs at night.

8.2. DESCRIPTION OF DANCE FORMS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN CEREMONIES AND FESTIVALS.

Dance is a vibrant and essential aspect of the Didayi tribe's cultural expression, deeply embedded in their ceremonies, festivals, and communal life. Each dance form carries unique significance, reflecting the tribe's connection to nature, spirituality, and social structure. The Harvest Dance (Jhumar), performed during the harvest season, celebrates agricultural success and reinforces the community's bond with the land, with dancers mimicking farming activities. The Ritualistic Dance (Sambal) is central to spiritual ceremonies, where slow, symbolic movements invoke blessings and honour deities, bridging the physical and spiritual worlds. The Fertility Dance (Ranga), a lively and dynamic performance, celebrates growth and abundance, emphasizing the community's reliance on nature's cycles. Finally, the Warrior Dance (Goti) showcases the tribe's martial traditions, with men reenacting battle formations and honouring past warriors through powerful, dramatic movements. Together, these dance forms embody the Didayi's rich cultural heritage, preserving their values, beliefs, and traditions across generations. Figure 5 shows how the people of the Didayi tribe have preserved their traditional dances and carried forward their culture by participating in various festivals.



Figure No.5: Didayi women are dancing in Malyabanta Mahotsav 2017 in Malkangiri district.

8.3. HOW MUSIC AND DANCE ARE INTEGRATED INTO COMMUNITY LIFE.

Music and dance are integral to the Didayi tribe's community life, seamlessly blending into their cultural, social, and spiritual practices. These art forms play a central role in festivals, such as the Harvest Dance (*Jhumar*) and Fertility Dance (*Ranga*), where the entire community gathers to celebrate agricultural success and seasonal cycles with rhythmic movements and traditional instruments. In rituals and ceremonies, such as rites of passage, weddings, and spiritual events, music and dance serve as a medium for invoking blessings and connecting with ancestors and deities, reinforcing the tribe's collective spiritual identity. Beyond formal occasions, informal gatherings and social interactions are often marked by spontaneous music and dance, fostering community bonding and passing down cultural knowledge. Through these performances, elders educate younger generations in traditional skills and values, ensuring the preservation of their rich cultural heritage. Music and dance are also performed during special ceremonial roles, honouring visitors or commemorating significant achievements, showcasing the tribe's artistic expression and communal pride. Together, these practices sustain the Didayi's cultural identity, strengthen social ties, and maintain the continuity of their traditions across generations. Figure 6 shows the musical instruments used by the Didayis during various festivals and celebrations. While the Didayis of the plains allow the *Damb* caste people to play all musical instruments, the people of the hills and Winnipeg play these instruments themselves and celebrate various festivals and celebrations.



Figure No. 6: *Tamak, Changu, Tidibibi and Mairi* are played by the people of Didayi tribe to dance *Demasha*.

9. REGIONAL INFLUENCE AND VARIATIONS

9.1. COMPARISON OF DIDAYI ARTS AND CRAFTS WITH THOSE OF NEIGHBOURING TRIBES AND REGIONS WITHIN ODISHA.

The arts and crafts of the Didayi tribe, while distinct, share both similarities and differences with those of neighbouring tribes and regions within Odisha. Like many indigenous groups in Odisha, the Didayi create utilitarian crafts from locally available materials such as bamboo, wood, and clay, often with simple motifs inspired by nature and totemic beliefs. Their focus is on functional items like baskets, mats, and tools. In contrast, the nearby Bonda tribe is renowned for its elaborate beadwork and brass jewellery, which plays a significant role in their social identity. The Dongria Kondh, from the Niyamgiri Hills, emphasize vibrant textiles, particularly embroidered shawls with geometric and floral designs, while the Didayi focus more on daily-use crafts. The Saora tribe, from regions like Koraput, is known for their Ittal wall paintings, depicting mythology and tribal life, a form of visual art not present in Didayi culture. Overall, the Didayi crafts are more functional than decorative, reflecting their deep connection to nature, while neighbouring tribes incorporate more ornamental elements into their artistic traditions, showcasing the diversity of Odisha's indigenous cultures.

9.2. HOW GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (KHAIRAPUT, KARUKONDA, AND CHITRAKONDA BLOCKS) INFLUENCES ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS.

The geographic location of the Didayi tribe, particularly in the Khairaput, Korukonda, and Chitrakonda blocks of Malkangiri district, plays a significant role in shaping their artistic expressions, craft techniques, and aesthetic choices. In the plains of Khairaput, the Didayi specialize in weaving with bamboo and reeds, creating functional items like baskets and mats, influenced by the region's fertile land and forest resources. In the rugged terrain of Korukonda, wood and stone are more prevalent, leading to the carving of wooden tools and ritualistic items, often adorned with wildlife-inspired designs.¹² The relative isolation of Korukonda helps preserve traditional art forms with minimal external influence. In contrast, Chitrakonda's proximity to the Balimela reservoir makes clay-based crafts more prominent, with pottery and figurines featuring aquatic motifs. The abundance of water resources and access to river transport in Chitrakonda allows for some external influences from neighbouring tribes. Overall, the distinct landscapes of each region plains, hills, and waterways directly influence the Didayi's choice of materials, designs, and the preservation of their cultural heritage.

10. CHALLENGES AND PRESERVATION EFFORTS

10.1. CURRENT CHALLENGES FACED BY THE DIDAYI TRIBE IN PRESERVING THEIR TRADITIONAL ARTS AND CRAFTS

The Didayi tribe faces several challenges in preserving their traditional arts and crafts due to the pressures of modernization, socio-economic factors, and external influences. The decline of traditional knowledge, as younger generations pursue modern education and employment, is leading to a loss of artisanal skills passed down through generations. Limited market access, especially in remote areas like Khairaput, Korukonda, and Chitrakonda, reduces economic incentives to continue these crafts, while competition from cheap, mass-produced goods further diminishes demand for handcrafted items. Cultural assimilation, driven by increased interaction with non-tribal communities and exposure to mainstream media, is diluting interest in traditional practices, particularly among the youth. Additionally, a lack of targeted government support and programs to promote and revitalize Didayi craftsmanship makes it difficult for artisans to sustain their work as a livelihood. Environmental changes, including deforestation and resource depletion, threaten access to essential materials like bamboo and wood, while shifts in social values have devalued traditional practices in favor of modern professions. These combined challenges threaten the survival of the Didayi's rich artistic traditions, necessitating focused efforts on cultural preservation and revival.¹³

10.2. EFFORTS BY GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN THESE CULTURAL PRACTICES.

Efforts by both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support and sustain the traditional arts and crafts of the Didayi tribe in Odisha are crucial in preserving their cultural heritage. Government initiatives, such as micro-projects aimed at improving livelihoods and the Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP), promote sustainable income through traditional crafts. Organizations like TRIFED provide marketing platforms for tribal artisans, while the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS) offer training programs to enhance craftsmanship and market appeal. Cultural preservation schemes targeting Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), to which the Didayi belong, further support these efforts.¹⁴ NGOs like Ekta Parishad, INTACH, and Living Farms focus on promoting sustainable development and cultural preservation, helping artisans access broader markets and fair prices. Exhibitions and cultural festivals, such as the Adivasi Mela, offer platforms for showcasing and selling tribal crafts, while research and documentation by institutions like the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) contribute to preserving traditional knowledge. Despite these efforts, ongoing support and innovative approaches are needed to ensure that the Didayi's cultural practices remain vibrant in the face of modernization and economic change.

11. IMPACT ON MODERN SOCIETY

11.1. THE INFLUENCE OF DIDAYI ART AND CULTURE ON CONTEMPORARY ART FORMS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES IN INDIA

Tourism and globalization are significantly affecting traditional Didayi arts, offering both opportunities and challenges. Increased exposure to tourism has led to a higher demand for Didayi crafts, providing economic benefits and broader market access for artisans. However, this commercialization often results in the alteration of traditional designs and methods to cater to tourist preferences, which can dilute the cultural authenticity of the crafts. Globalization introduces new materials and influences, causing artisans to incorporate non-traditional elements, potentially overshadowing ancestral techniques.¹⁵ Additionally, younger generations are shifting away from traditional arts due to modern education and employment opportunities, threatening the transmission of cultural knowledge. Despite these challenges, globalization also fosters cultural hybridization, allowing Didayi artisans to innovate while staying connected to their roots. Efforts by the government and NGOs aim to preserve traditional methods through training and exhibitions, helping balance cultural preservation with market demands. Ultimately, the future of Didayi arts hinges on how well the community can maintain its traditions while adapting to the modern world.

12. FINDINGS

The Didayi tribe's traditional arts and crafts are deeply rooted in their connection to nature and cultural heritage, encompassing intricate basket weaving, pottery, and the use of natural materials like bamboo, clay, and natural dyes, with symbols reflecting totemic animals and natural elements central to their cosmology. These crafts hold cultural and spiritual significance, often used in religious rituals and festivals, with artistic styles varying by geographic location, such as the rugged materials used by artisans in hilly regions and the influence of trade routes in plains areas. However, modernization and tourism have posed challenges, leading to the commercialization of crafts and disengagement among younger generations, who favor modern education and urban jobs. Globalization has introduced new materials and styles, creating a hybridization of traditional and modern elements, though this raises concerns about the loss of authenticity. Efforts by the government and NGOs aim to revitalize and promote Didayi arts through festivals, exhibitions, and training programs that provide economic opportunities while preserving cultural heritage. Comparatively, Didayi art, though influenced by neighbouring tribes, maintains distinct motifs, symbolism, and ritual uses, contributing to the rich artistic diversity of the region.

13. CONCLUSION

The traditional arts and crafts of the Didayi tribe in Malkangiri district, Odisha, are a rich cultural tapestry deeply connected to their spiritual beliefs, natural environment, and social identity, with their craftsmanship in basket weaving, pottery, and ritual items holding both aesthetic and cultural significance. Geographic location influences their artistic styles, shaped by access to resources and interactions with neighbouring communities. However, modernization, globalization, and changing socio-economic dynamics pose significant challenges to preserving these traditions, as tourism and global markets introduce economic opportunities while also risking the commercialization and dilution of authentic Didayi art. Additionally, younger generations are increasingly disengaged from their ancestral heritage in favor of modern education and employment. Continued support and appreciation for Didayi artistic traditions are vital to preserving their cultural identity, with government and NGO efforts playing a critical role in promoting, sustaining, and revitalizing these crafts. To ensure their survival in a rapidly changing world, a balance must be maintained between adaptation and the preservation of their unique artistic heritage, enabling the Didayi people to pass down their legacy to future generations.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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