



SAMAJ PRABODHAK

PROJECT REPORT

Reviving Traditions, Empowering Communities



An Initiative of
VK-AICYAM
Bhubaneswar, Odisha



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Chapter 01: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the very outset, VK-AICYAM **expresses its deepest respect and gratitude** to the indigenous communities whose traditions, collective memory, and cultural wisdom form the very foundation of this initiative.

For generations, these communities have nurtured knowledge systems related to nature, healing, social harmony, and cultural expression. Their openness in sharing experiences, beliefs, and practices has made it possible to document and reflect upon these living traditions with sincerity and respect. Their insights, rooted in years of observation and practice, continue to illuminate the depth and relevance of indigenous knowledge systems. Their participation reaffirmed that these knowledge traditions are not relics of the past but living sources of guidance for society.

VK-AICYAM is **profoundly indebted to** the community elders, traditional healers, storytellers, and other knowledge holders who generously shared their wisdom and life experiences. It **gratefully acknowledges** the community leaders, women leaders, and cultural custodians who extended their guidance and encouragement throughout the process. The role of women as protectors of culture and transmitters of tradition has been particularly inspiring, and their participation also added depth and authenticity to community engagement process.

Its heartfelt appreciation goes to the Samaj Prabodhaks, the young community leaders who undertook the responsibility of engaging with their own people to rediscover, understand & promote traditional knowledge and cultural practices. Their dedication, curiosity and commitment to learning from elders and interacting with knowledge practitioners have played a central role in shaping the experiences reflected in this report. The organization also conveys its sincere thanks to the family members of the Samaj Prabodhaks, whose encouragement and support enabled these young participants to devote time and effort to this important collective endeavour.

Its **sincere thanks** are due to the trainers and resource persons who patiently guided the Samaj Prabodhaks through three phases of orientation and training. Their thoughtful facilitation through classroom interaction, field-based exposure, and advanced reflection helped the participants appreciate the broader significance of indigenous knowledge systems as well as their role in the community life.

It **acknowledges** the valuable encouragement, thoughtful engagement of researchers, academicians, administrators and other stakeholders who interacted at different stages of the program, particularly during community events and organization's Annual Day gathering. Their reflections and perspectives enriched dialogue between community knowledge holders and the wider intellectual community. **It extends gratitude** to all individuals, associates, and well-wishers who, in various ways, contributed to this collective effort.

VK-AICYAM wishes to place on record its sincere gratitude to the donor agency whose generous financial support made this initiative possible. Their trust in the importance of community-led efforts for protecting and promoting indigenous knowledge systems has been instrumental in enabling this initiative to take shape and reach communities it intended to serve.

The Programme team values the guidance of VK-AICYAM advisors and the involvement of members in developing strategy, planning, and supporting the execution. Their thoughtful direction, constant encouragement, and critical reflections at various stages of Programme greatly enriched the process of engagement with communities and helped in shaping the learning journey that this report seeks to capture. The institutional support extended by the Head Office (VRMVK Kanyakumari) strengthened the process of reflection, learning, and community engagement.

This document is not merely a report of activities; it is a reflection of the shared learning, trust, and participation of many individuals and communities who believe in the enduring value of indigenous knowledge and the importance of nurturing it for generations to come.

Chapter 02: PREFACE

Why the Samaj Prabodhak initiative was conceptualized

The **Samaj Prabodhak initiative** was conceptualized with the understanding that the preservation of traditional knowledge cannot be achieved only through documentation or academic inquiry; it must emerge from within the community itself. Many indigenous societies possess profound knowledge systems embedded in their daily lives, rituals, ecological practices, oral traditions, and social governance.

However, rapid socio-economic changes, migration, and the influence of modern lifestyles have increasingly distanced younger generations from these inherited wisdom traditions. The initiative therefore sought to nurture **community-based cultural facilitators** young individuals rooted in their own societies who could observe, understand, and help sustain their cultural heritage with sensitivity and responsibility.

Relevance to Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Within the broader effort of protecting and promoting **Indian Indigenous Knowledge Systems**, the role of such grassroots cultural stewards becomes particularly significant. Indigenous knowledge is not merely a collection of practices; it represents a **living worldview**, shaped through generations of interaction with nature, society, and spirituality.

Communities such as the Paudi Bhuyan, Bathudi, and Juang possess cultural expressions and knowledge traditions that contribute to the wider mosaic of India's civilizational heritage. By engaging youth as Samaj Prabodhaks, the initiative attempts to create a bridge between **traditional wisdom and contemporary awareness**, ensuring that these knowledge systems are not only preserved but also understood and valued by future generations.

Community Leadership Vision

At the heart of the organization's vision lies the belief that the protection and promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems must be led by communities themselves. Knowledge traditions that have evolved over generations cannot be sustained merely through external interventions; they require **local custodianship, collective ownership, and culturally rooted leadership**. The concept of the Samaj Prabodhak therefore emerges as an effort to nurture such community leadership from within individuals who are not only observers of their traditions but also active facilitators of cultural continuity.

Why the report focuses on introspection and learning

By encouraging young members of indigenous communities to engage with elders, knowledge holders, and practitioners of oral traditions, the initiative attempts to create a **living bridge between generations**. This approach recognizes that sustainable preservation of traditional knowledge depends on empowering communities to **interpret, document and transmit their own cultural wisdom** in ways that remain meaningful within their social context.

In this sense, the Samaj Prabodhak initiative is not merely a programme but a step toward building a **community-led movement for safeguarding indigenous knowledge**, where local voices, experiences, and leadership become the primary drivers of cultural resilience and continuity.

The present report therefore places emphasis on **introspection and learning**. Rather than presenting the programme only thru' achievements and activities, it seeks to reflect honestly on experiences, challenges and emerging insights from the field. Such reflection is essential for understanding what has truly been achieved, where limitations have been encountered and how initiative may evolve in the future.

By documenting these learnings, the report aspires to contribute not only to institutional learning but also to the broader discourse on community-led approaches to protecting and promoting indigenous knowledge systems in India.

VISION: COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Indigenous knowledge systems have evolved through generations of lived experience, close interaction with nature, and collective wisdom embedded in community life. Communities themselves are the primary

custodians of this knowledge, safeguarding traditions related to healing practices, ecological understanding, social governance, and cultural expressions. Protecting these knowledge systems therefore requires recognizing and strengthening the role of communities as the rightful stewards of their own intellectual and cultural heritage.

A vital aspect of sustaining indigenous knowledge lies in intergenerational transmission. Traditional wisdom survives not merely through written records but through continuous sharing between elders and youth, through oral traditions, rituals, community gatherings, and everyday practices. When younger generations actively engage with elders and knowledge holders, the chain of cultural continuity remains intact, allowing traditions to adapt while retaining their foundational values.

In this context, empowering youth as Samaj Prabodhaks represents a meaningful step toward nurturing community-led cultural leadership. By equipping young members of indigenous communities with awareness, confidence, and opportunities for engagement, they become facilitators who connect elders, knowledge practitioners, and the wider community. Acting as bridges between tradition and contemporary realities, Samaj Prabodhaks help document, interpret, and promote indigenous knowledge systems while inspiring their communities to take pride in their cultural heritage and ensure its continuity for future generations.

Chapter 03: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Samaj Prabodhak initiative** was conceptualized as a community-based effort to encourage the protection and promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems within Janjati communities. The programme sought to identify and engage motivated youth who could work as cultural facilitators within their own villages, interacting with elders, knowledge holders, and community leaders to strengthen awareness and appreciation of traditional practices and values.

At the outset, twenty youth from different Janjati communities were selected to participate in the initiative. However, due to a variety of socio-economic and practical circumstances, the number of active participants gradually reduced, and ultimately **five Samaj Prabodhaks continued their engagement with the programme**. These individuals belonged to the **Paudi Bhuyan, Bathudi, and Juang communities**, and worked within their respective social and cultural environments.

To prepare the participants for their role, the organization designed a **three-phase capacity-building process**. The first phase consisted of a ten-day foundational training programme that introduced the participants to the concept of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, community engagement methods, and the importance of cultural documentation. This was followed by a one-month field-based orientation period during which the Prabodhaks observed community practices, interacted with elders and knowledge holders, and familiarized themselves with the cultural dynamics of their villages. The final phase involved a five-day advanced training session in which participants reflected upon their field experiences and discussed thematic areas of documentation.

Throughout the project period, the Prabodhaks remained in regular contact with the organization through **weekly online interactions and guidance sessions**. These meetings provided an opportunity for collective reflection, progress assessment, and discussion of challenges encountered in the field. As part of the learning process, the Samaj Prabodhaks were encouraged to prepare **thematic essays based on their observations and experiences**. These writings focused on three broad areas: **Varshik Dhara**, which explored the annual cultural cycle of festivals and seasonal rituals; **Jeevan Dhara**, which examined the values and practices guiding everyday life within the community; and **Social and Cultural Governance Systems**, which looked at traditional mechanisms of leadership, decision-making, and social organization.

The Prabodhaks also engaged in various forms of community interaction, including youth engagement activities, meetings with elders and women leaders, and conversations with traditional healers and practitioners of oral traditions. These engagements helped foster a renewed appreciation for cultural knowledge within the community and created opportunities for intergenerational dialogue.

An important moment in the programme was the **Annual Day celebration of the organization**, during which traditional healers, storytellers, knowledge holders from different communities participated. Their participation allowed them to share their experiences and perspectives before a wider audience that included members of various Janjati communities, scholars, researchers & administrators. The event provided a valuable platform for recognizing and celebrating role of indigenous knowledge custodians.

While the initiative achieved several positive outcomes in terms of community engagement and cultural awareness, the programme also encountered certain challenges. The reduction in the number of active Samaj Prabodhaks highlighted the practical difficulties faced by community youth, including livelihood pressures, migration, and limited availability of time. These experiences have provided important insights into the need for stronger mentoring mechanisms, sustained support, and more flexible programme structures.

Despite these challenges, the Samaj Prabodhak initiative has demonstrated the potential of **community-based leadership in protecting and promoting Indigenous Knowledge Systems**. The experiences gathered during the project have also provided the organization with valuable learning that will inform future strategies and interventions.

The present report therefore serves both as a **reflection on the journey undertaken and as a foundation for future initiatives aimed at strengthening community engagement in the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge**.

EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

KEY ASPECT	SNAPSHOT
Project Title	Empowering and Nurturing Community Youths from 10 Janajati Communities of Odisha as “Samaj Prabodhaks” for Community Development and Documentation, Preservation and Dissemination of Indigenous Knowledge Systems
Project Duration	15 Months (Five Quarters)
Geographical Focus	Odisha – Engagement with 10 Janajati communities: Juanga, Bathudi, Sabara, Bhuyan, Munda, Santal, Gond, Kondha, Kisan and Paroja
Core Idea	Empowering tribal youth as Samaj Prabodhaks (Community Enlighteners) to serve as facilitators for cultural documentation, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and community-based development.
Initial Design	Identification and capacity building of 20 tribal youth (2 from each community) through a structured three-phase training and field engagement programme.
Training Approach	Three-Phase Capacity Building Model: 1. Ten-day residential orientation 2. Thirty-day field immersion and community documentation 3. Five-day advanced training and reflection.
Key Focus Areas	Indigenous Knowledge Documentation Youth Leadership Oral Traditions Cultural Revitalization Community Dialogue Traditional Healing Practices.
Major Activities	Community engagement with elders and knowledge holders Documentation of rituals, folklore and healing traditions Youth mobilization Cultural events Knowledge-sharing workshops.
Key Outcomes	Emergence of a core group of Samaj Prabodhaks actively engaging with their communities Improved dialogue between youth and elders Documentation of cultural traditions and indigenous practices Increased awareness on preserving traditional knowledge.
Challenges	Participant dropouts due to livelihood pressures and migration Geographic dispersion of communities Limited documentation experience requiring continuous mentoring.
Key Learnings	Indigenous knowledge systems remain vibrant within community life Youth engagement is essential for continuity Elders and women remain primary custodians of traditional wisdom Sustained institutional support is critical for community-led cultural initiatives.
Future Direction	Strengthening the Samaj Prabodhak network Promoting oral traditions and storytelling Profiling knowledge holders Encouraging women’s leadership in cultural preservation Expanding documentation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge systems.

ESSENCE OF THE INITIATIVE

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative represents an effort to nurture **community-based leadership for safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge Systems**. By empowering tribal youth to engage with elders, document traditions & facilitate community dialogue, project seeks to ensure that indigenous wisdom continues to guide community life while inspiring younger generations to value and sustain their cultural heritage.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Project Purpose

The **Samaj Prabodhak Project** was conceived as a strategic initiative to protect, document, and revitalize the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of Janajati communities in Odisha. Recognizing that traditional knowledge survives primarily through community practice and intergenerational transmission, the project aimed to empower tribal youth as “**Samaj Prabodhaks**” (**Community Enlighteners**) who could act as catalysts for cultural documentation, knowledge sharing, and community-led development while remaining rooted in their own socio-cultural context.

Geographical Coverage

The project engaged youth representatives from **10 Janajati communities of Odisha** - Juanga, Bathudi, Sabara, Bhuyan, Munda, Santal, Gond, Kondha, Kisan, and Paroja. While the initiative sought to create a network of community-based knowledge facilitators across these communities, the core implementation gradually concentrated around the communities where the trained youth were actively engaged and able to sustain their involvement.

Initial Design

The project was originally designed to **identify, train, and mentor 20 tribal youths** (two from each community) as Samaj Prabodhaks over a **15-month period**. The programme followed a structured three-phase learning approach combining training, field immersion, and reflection:

- **Phase I:** 10-day residential orientation on Indigenous Knowledge Systems, cultural traditions, sustainable development, and community facilitation.
- **Phase II:** 30-day field internship involving community mapping, interaction with elders, documentation of rituals, folklore, and traditional healing practices.
- **Phase III:** 5-day advanced training focusing on peer learning, documentation methods, and development of community action plans.

Following training, the Samaj Prabodhaks were expected to engage in community documentation, cultural awareness activities, and youth mobilization.

Key Activities Undertaken

During the course of the project, several important activities were undertaken, including:

- ✓ Capacity building of Samaj Prabodhaks through structured training and field orientation.
- ✓ Community interaction and engagement with elders, traditional healers, and knowledge holders.
- ✓ Documentation of traditional practices, folklore, cultural rituals, and community knowledge systems.
- ✓ Facilitation of dialogue between youth & elders to strengthen intergenerational knowledge transmission.
- ✓ Organization of community events, workshops, and cultural interactions highlighting traditional practices.
- ✓ Promotion of reflective writing and thematic observations by Samaj Prabodhaks on community life, traditions, and governance practices.

Major Achievements

Despite operational challenges, the initiative generated several meaningful outcomes:

- ✓ Emergence of a core group of **Samaj Prabodhaks committed to community engagement and cultural documentation**.
- ✓ Increased interaction between youth and community elders on issues related to tradition, culture and indigenous knowledge.
- ✓ Documentation of a range of traditional practices, oral narratives, and cultural expressions.
- ✓ Greater awareness within communities about importance of preserving indigenous knowledge systems.
- ✓ Creation of a platform for knowledge holders, traditional healers, and cultural practitioners to share their experiences and insights.

Key Challenges

The project also encountered certain practical challenges that influenced its overall implementation.

- ✓ **Dropout of participants:** Although 20 Samaj Prabodhaks were initially selected, only a smaller group could continue actively due to livelihood pressures, migration and certain exclusive personal commitments.
- ✓ Geographic dispersion of communities made regular engagement and coordination difficult.
- ✓ Limited documentation experience among participants required continuous mentoring and guidance.
- ✓ Balancing traditional knowledge documentation with everyday livelihood responsibilities of community youth remained a persistent challenge.

Major Learnings

Several important insights emerged from the implementation of the project:

- ✓ Indigenous knowledge systems are deeply embedded in everyday community life and cannot be understood without sustained community engagement.
- ✓ **Youth engagement is essential** for ensuring continuity of cultural traditions.
- ✓ Elders, women, and traditional practitioners remain the **primary custodians of knowledge** within tribal communities.
- ✓ Community-based leadership models such as the Samaj Prabodhak initiative have the potential to create **local custodians of cultural heritage**.
- ✓ Continuous mentoring and institutional support are necessary for sustaining youth-led cultural initiatives.

Future Direction

Building upon the experiences and learnings of this initiative, the organization envisions strengthening and expanding the Samaj Prabodhak model in the coming years. Priority areas include:

- ✓ Further empowering community youth as cultural facilitators and knowledge documenters
- ✓ Promoting oral traditions and storytelling as key mediums of knowledge transmission
- ✓ Encouraging women's leadership in safeguarding and transmitting traditional knowledge
- ✓ Identifying and profiling community knowledge holders and cultural practitioners
- ✓ Expanding documentation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge through community events, publications, and digital platforms.

Through these efforts, the initiative seeks to contribute to a **community-led movement for protecting and promoting Indigenous Knowledge Systems**, ensuring that traditional wisdom continues to guide future generations.

Chapter 04: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Community Custodianship

Across diverse landscapes of India, indigenous communities have nurtured rich traditions of knowledge and cultural practices that have evolved through centuries of lived experience and close interaction with nature. These Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) encompass a wide spectrum of wisdom related to ecological stewardship, health and healing, food systems, cultural expression, social governance, and spiritual life.

Far from being static relics of the past, these knowledge traditions continue to guide community life by offering practical insights into sustainable living, collective responsibility, and harmonious coexistence with the natural environment. In tribal societies, knowledge has traditionally been transmitted through community institutions, oral traditions, rituals, and everyday practices. Elders, healers, storytellers, and community leaders serve as custodians of this wisdom, ensuring that cultural values and practical knowledge are passed on from one generation to another. This system of community custodianship represents a deeply participatory form of knowledge preservation in which the community collectively safeguards and nurtures its intellectual and cultural heritage.

However, the continuity of these traditions depends on sustained engagement between generations. When younger members of the community actively learn from elders and participate in cultural practices, traditional knowledge remains vibrant and relevant. Conversely, when this intergenerational link weakens, the knowledge systems that once sustained communities' risk gradual erosion.

Emerging Challenges to Traditional Knowledge

In recent decades, tribal communities across India have been experiencing rapid socio-economic and cultural transformations. Processes such as modernization, migration, urban influence, and changing livelihood patterns have significantly altered traditional community structures and lifestyles. While many of these changes bring new opportunities, they have also created challenges for the continuity of indigenous knowledge systems. One of the most visible concerns is the declining transmission of traditional knowledge to younger generations. Migration for education and employment often disconnects youth from the cultural environment in which such knowledge is nurtured. At the same time, increasing dominance of formal education systems and modern lifestyles sometimes leads to a perception that traditional knowledge is outdated or less relevant.

As a result, many cultural practices, oral traditions, and local knowledge systems that once formed the backbone of community life are gradually disappearing. Traditional healers, ritual practitioners, storytellers, and ecological knowledge holders are ageing, and in many cases their knowledge remains undocumented and unrecognized. This situation poses a serious challenge not only to the preservation of cultural heritage but also to the sustainability of community life, as indigenous knowledge often contains valuable insights into environmental stewardship, health practices, and social cohesion.

Community Level Persuasion and Ownership

Realization of Community Ownership

The preservation and revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems cannot be sustained through externally driven efforts alone. The experiences from the initiative underline that meaningful impact emerges only when communities themselves begin to recognize the value of their cultural heritage and assume ownership of its continuity. The process of community engagement - through dialogue with elders, interaction with knowledge holders, and participation in cultural activities - gradually nurtures this sense of ownership. Community members, particularly youth, begin to see their traditions not merely as inherited practices but as living repositories of identity, wisdom, and resilience.

This realization transforms the approach from passive observation to active participation. Documentation, storytelling, and cultural exchange become collective responsibilities rather than project-driven tasks. As a result, the initiative evolves into a community-led process where preservation is intrinsically linked with pride, identity, and continuity.

Understanding of Institutional Vision and National Perspective

The initiative is grounded in a broader institutional vision that views Indigenous Knowledge Systems as essential to building culturally rooted and self-reliant communities. This perspective goes beyond cultural preservation and positions traditional knowledge as a valuable resource for addressing contemporary challenges related to environment, livelihoods, and social cohesion. As the project progressed, community members increasingly began to understand that their local traditions are part of a larger national framework that emphasizes the importance of Indian Knowledge Systems. This realization created a deeper sense of relevance and dignity associated with their practices. The initiative thus serves as a bridge between grassroots realities and a wider national perspective - where local knowledge is not seen in isolation but as a contribution to a larger civilizational continuum. This alignment strengthens both community confidence and the purposefulness of the intervention.

Orientation of the Initiative towards Institutional Vision

The operational design of the initiative reflects a conscious effort to translate institutional vision into community-centered action. Structured mobilization processes - such as intergenerational dialogues, participatory documentation, and community-based learning platforms - have been instrumental in this regard. At the core of this approach is the concept of the **Samaj Prabodhak**, envisioned as a community-based facilitator who embodies the spirit of this initiative. As cultural motivators, they encourage participation in traditions and community life. As knowledge mobilizers, they engage with elders, healers, and practitioners to document and disseminate indigenous knowledge. As bridges between generations, they make traditional wisdom accessible and relevant to contemporary youth.

Youth engagement plays a particularly critical role in this orientation. Their ability to combine curiosity with adaptability enables them to connect traditional knowledge with modern tools such as documentation techniques and communication platforms. This not only enhances the quality of documentation but also ensures that knowledge systems remain dynamic and evolving. Through this structured yet flexible approach, the initiative moves beyond documentation towards creating a sustained ecosystem of cultural learning, leadership, and community engagement. It lays the foundation for a long-term process where communities are empowered to preserve, reinterpret, and transmit their knowledge traditions in alignment with both local aspirations and broader developmental perspectives.

Converging Perspective

Taken together, these dimensions highlight that community ownership, institutional vision, and structured facilitation are not isolated elements but mutually reinforcing components. The initiative demonstrates that when communities are meaningfully engaged, guided by a clear vision, and supported through appropriate structures, Indigenous Knowledge Systems can be revitalized as living, relevant & future-oriented resources. This convergence ultimately positions the Samaj Prabodhak model as a pathway for nurturing culturally grounded community leadership - capable of sustaining tradition while engaging constructively with the evolving realities of the present.

Chapter 05: PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Program Objectives and Mapping to National Perspectives

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative is anchored in the understanding that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are not merely cultural artifacts but living, dynamic frameworks embedded within community life. Their protection and revitalization require approaches that go beyond documentation and extend into community participation, youth leadership, and sustained intergenerational dialogue.

In this context, the program objectives have been carefully conceptualized not as isolated activity targets but as interconnected pathways that contribute to building a community-driven ecosystem for safeguarding indigenous knowledge traditions. These objectives collectively aim to demonstrate a practical and field-tested model through which traditional knowledge can be rediscovered, documented, and meaningfully transmitted across generations.

By integrating capacity building, participatory engagement, systematic documentation, and continuous community feedback, the initiative positions grassroots leadership at the center of cultural preservation. The approach recognizes that sustainable outcomes can only emerge when communities themselves become active custodians of their knowledge systems, with youth playing a catalytic role in bridging tradition and contemporary realities.

The program is intrinsically Aligned with Broader National Priorities that emphasize the importance of preserving and promoting India's diverse knowledge traditions. Indigenous Knowledge Systems represent a vital component of the country's civilizational heritage, offering insights into sustainable living, ecological balance, health practices, and social harmony.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition at the national level of the need to integrate traditional knowledge with contemporary development frameworks. The Samaj Prabodhak initiative contributes to this larger vision by operationalizing these principles at the grassroots level.

It creates a platform where local knowledge is not only preserved but also positioned as a relevant resource for addressing present-day developmental challenges. By fostering community ownership and youth-led engagement, the initiative aligns with national priorities related to cultural preservation, community empowerment, and inclusive development. It also resonates with the broader discourse on strengthening Indian Knowledge Systems as part of education, research, and policy dialogue.

The Broad Objective in Perspective

At its core, the initiative seeks to promote the protection and revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems through community-based leadership. This objective reflects a shift from externally driven interventions to locally anchored processes where communities actively participate in preserving their cultural heritage. The concept of nurturing youth as Samaj Prabodhaks is central to this vision.

These individuals serve as facilitators who engage with elders, document traditional practices, and encourage wider community participation. Through their role, indigenous knowledge is sustained as a living and evolving tradition rather than being confined to static records.

In essence, the program objectives collectively contribute to a long-term vision of strengthening cultural continuity, community resilience, and knowledge sovereignty. At the same time, they create meaningful linkages with national priorities by demonstrating how grassroots initiatives can play a significant role in preserving and revitalizing India's rich and diverse knowledge heritage.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Youth Empowerment and Capacity Building

The first objective focuses on identifying, training, and empowering 20 community youth (two from each Janajati community) as Samaj Prabodhaks who can act as catalysts for community engagement and cultural revitalization. Youth empowerment is a critical component in ensuring the continuity of indigenous knowledge traditions, as younger generations are the future custodians of community heritage.

Through structured training, field exposure, and mentoring, these youth participants are expected to develop skills in community facilitation, cultural documentation, and participatory learning. The training process not only equips them with technical competencies but also encourages a deeper appreciation of their own cultural traditions and community knowledge systems. This objective supports the empirical orientation of the project by creating locally rooted change agents who can directly engage with community members, observe practices, document traditions, and facilitate dialogues within their own social context. By nurturing youth leadership in this manner, project aims to build a sustainable foundation for community-led cultural initiatives.

2. Indigenous Knowledge Documentation

The second objective focuses on documenting at least 50 indigenous knowledge systems and practices, with a minimum of five from each participating community. These knowledge practices may include traditional healing methods, agricultural practices, food systems, ecological knowledge, ritual traditions, and oral narratives that reflect the cultural worldview of the communities. Documentation is undertaken through participatory approaches, where Samaj Prabodhaks interacts with elders, traditional healers, artisans, and other knowledge holders to record their experiences and insights.

This approach ensures that documentation is grounded in community narratives and lived realities, rather than external interpretations. The empirical value of this objective lies in its effort to transform intangible community knowledge into documented resources that can be preserved, studied, and shared. Such documentation also helps highlight the relevance of indigenous knowledge in addressing contemporary concerns related to sustainability, health, and environmental conservation.

3. Preservation and Dissemination

The third objective focuses on ensuring that the documented knowledge does not remain confined to reports or archives but is actively shared, celebrated, and disseminated within communities. This will be achieved through the organization of community events, knowledge-sharing platforms, and the preparation of a bilingual knowledge repository in Odia and English. Community events serve as spaces where elders, youth, and knowledge practitioners can come together to share stories, demonstrate practices, and engage in dialogue about their cultural heritage.

Such interactions help revive interest in traditional practices and encourage younger generations to learn from community knowledge holders. The bilingual repository will further contribute to preserving and sharing indigenous knowledge by making the documented material accessible to both community members and a wider audience of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. In this way, the project seeks to transform documentation into a dynamic process of cultural revitalization and knowledge dissemination.

4. Monitoring, Learning, and Community Feedback

The fourth objective emphasizes the importance of establishing a community-based monitoring and learning framework to assess the progress and impact of the initiative. By engaging at least 300 community members across the participating communities, the project aims to gather feedback on the relevance, effectiveness, and future potential of the activities undertaken.

This participatory feedback process allows the project to continuously learn from community experiences and refine its approaches accordingly. It also strengthens community ownership by giving local stakeholders an opportunity to reflect on how the initiative contributes to the preservation and promotion of their cultural traditions. From an empirical perspective, this objective helps generate ground-level insights and evidence that can inform future initiatives and policy discussions related to indigenous knowledge systems. The feedback gathered will also contribute to identifying opportunities for sustaining and expanding the Samaj Prabodhak model beyond the current project period.

Integrative Significance of the Objectives

Taken together, these objectives form a holistic framework that combines capacity building, documentation, dissemination as well as participatory learning. Each objective reinforces the others, creating a structured process through which indigenous knowledge can be rediscovered, documented and revitalized within the community context. The emphasis on community leadership, youth engagement and participatory documentation ensures that project is not merely an academic exercise but a practical and experiential

initiative grounded in community realities. By generating knowledge through field engagement & community interaction, the project contributes to building an empirical foundation for an understanding and strengthening Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Through this integrated approach, Samaj Prabodhak initiative seeks to demonstrate that community-led cultural initiatives can play a vital role in preserving indigenous knowledge while empowering the communities to shape their own developmental pathways.

Objectives of Samaj Prabodhak initiative represent an evolving pathway rather than a finite destination. Efforts to protect and revitalize indigenous knowledge systems require time, trust and sustained interaction between communities, youth and knowledge holders. The present phase of the project has therefore served as an important process of learning, experimentation and community engagement. Insights emerging from this experience will strengthen Samaj Prabodhak model, contribute develop more robust approaches for community-led preservation of indigenous knowledge traditions.

Chapter 06: PROGRAMME DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative was conceptualized as a community-centered intervention aimed at promoting the protection and revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems through the engagement of local youth leaders. The project design was based on the understanding that sustainable preservation of indigenous knowledge traditions requires active participation from community members, particularly younger generations who can serve as bridges between traditional knowledge holders and contemporary social contexts.

The methodology of the project therefore focused on identifying motivated youth from tribal communities, equipping them with appropriate orientation and exposure, and enabling them to facilitate processes of community engagement, cultural documentation, and intergenerational knowledge exchange. The design of the project was structured around the following key components.

Selection of Samaj Prabodhaks

The identification and selection of Samaj Prabodhaks constituted a crucial foundation of the project design. Since the initiative aimed to promote community-based leadership for safeguarding indigenous knowledge, it was considered essential to select individuals who possessed both familiarity with their communities and an inclination toward social engagement.

The process of identifying potential Samaj Prabodhaks was undertaken by Mr. Laxmi Bhai, Secretary of the organization, who has long-standing engagement with grassroots community initiatives across different districts of Odisha. Drawing upon his extensive field experience and long-term association with village-level activities, the Secretary identified individuals from various tribal communities who had previously shown interest in community development activities and who maintained close social connections within their villages.

These individuals were nominated from their respective communities and were known to the organization through earlier interactions, local initiatives, and promotional activities undertaken at the village level. Their familiarity with community structures, cultural practices, and local leadership networks was considered an important factor in enabling them to function effectively as facilitators of community engagement. This approach ensured that the selected Samaj Prabodhaks were not external actors but community-based youth who possessed social legitimacy and acceptance within their own communities.

Age Group and Community Representation

The project design emphasized the importance of youth engagement as a strategy for promoting the continuity of indigenous knowledge traditions. Accordingly, the Samaj Prabodhaks were selected from the age group of 21 to 40 years, representing a demographic segment capable of active field engagement while also maintaining close interaction with elders and traditional knowledge holders. To ensure diversity and representation across different tribal communities, the project identified ten Janjati communities from various regions of Odisha. From each community, two youth were selected to serve as Samaj Prabodhaks, thereby creating a network of twenty participants representing the Janajati communities namely – Juanga, Bathudi, Sabara, Bhuyan, Munda, Santal, Gond, Kondha, Kisan and Paroja

This representation ensured that the initiative was not limited to a single cultural context but instead encompassed a broader spectrum of indigenous traditions, cultural practices, and community experiences present within the state. By bringing together youth from diverse tribal backgrounds, the project also sought to encourage cross-learning and exchange of cultural experiences among participating Samaj Prabodhaks.

Training and Orientation of Samaj Prabodhaks

Recognizing that most of the selected Samaj Prabodhaks possessed limited prior exposure to formal documentation or community facilitation processes, the project design incorporated a structured capacity-building programme aimed at strengthening their understanding of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and their roles within the initiative. The training strategy was aligned with overall objectives of project & was designed to enhance knowledge, awareness & practical competencies of Samaj Prabodhaks. Orientation process focused on enabling them to understand the broader significance of indigenous knowledge traditions, importance of community participation in cultural preservation, and the methods required for engaging with

elders, knowledge holders, storytellers, and other stakeholders within their communities. Taking into account the varying levels of educational background and prior experience among the participants, the training programme was organized in 3three distinct phases, each intended to gradually build their capacity and confidence.

COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING FRAMEWORK FOR SAMAJ PRABODHAKS

Phase	Type	Duration	Focus
Phase 1	Residential	10 Days	Foundational Knowledge + Soft Skills
Phase 2	Field Internship	30 Days	Community Immersion + Practical Application
Phase 3	Residential	5 Days	Reflection, Documentation and Advanced Skills

Phase 1: Foundational Residential Training (10 Days)

Objective: To equip participants with foundational knowledge on culture, sustainability, communication, and digital literacy.

Day / Topics	Learning Outcome
Day 1 Orientation + Role of Samaj Prabodhak	Understanding role, expectations, and training journey
Day 2 Basics of Sustainable Development	Grasp the principles of sustainability and community-based development
Day 3 Dharma, Sanskriti and Belief Systems of Janajatis	Develop cultural pride and the contextual worldview
Day 4 Indigenous Knowledge Systems & Traditional Practices	Link traditional practices to livelihoods, healing, ecology
Day 5 Oral Traditions, Folk Arts, Folktales and Local History	Appreciation of storytelling, local narratives
Day 6 Basic Computer Training (Typing, Document Creation)	Ability to digitally record/document indigenous knowledge
Day 7 Introduction to English (basic commands, terms)	Confidence in handling basic English during documentation
Day 8 Photography and Video Documentation (Basics)	Use visual tools to capture community stories and practices
Day 9 Soft Skills: Communication, Leadership, Event Facilitation	Build confidence to facilitate community meetings/workshops
Day 10 Planning for Phase 2: Tools for Community Engagement	Prepare community entry strategy and field documentation plan

Phase 2: Field Internship (30 Days)

Objective: Field immersion to practice documentation, communication & community facilitation skills.

Activities and Themes

Week	Focus Area	Learning Outcome
Week 1	Community Mapping and Rapport Building	Create village profiles, identify elders and mothers, note cultural hotspots
Week 2	Knowledge Documentation: Healing, Rituals, Songs, Stories	Record Five folktales, Two Rituals, Three songs and One healer's knowledge.
Week 3	Facilitate Sharing Circles: Mothers, Elders and Youth	Conduct Three community meetings and/or storytelling sessions
Week 4	Skill Demonstration and Youth Engagement	Organize One youth dialogue, document local skills, test organizing skills

Phase 3: Reflection and Advanced Training (5 Days)

Objective: To consolidate learning, build reporting and dissemination skills, and plan future steps.

Day/Topics	Learning Outcomes
Day 1 - Sharing Field Learnings + Peer Review	Reflect and analyze challenges and success stories
Day 2 - Documentation: Editing, Structuring Reports	Structured document for community knowledge
Day 3 - Designing Community Programmes (Festivals etc.)	Learn event planning and budgeting
Day 4 - Digital Skills, Use of social media for Awareness	How to use digital tools for community outreach
Day 5 - Develop Personal Action Plan as Prabodhak	Set goals & commitments for the post-training role

Logical Linkage of Phases

Phase	Leads To
Phase 1	Builds confidence, foundational knowledge, and technical skills
Phase 2	Allows practice of Phase 1 knowledge in real-life settings
Phase 3	Synthesizes learning, prepares for real-world application and leadership

Phase I: Foundational Orientation (10 Days – Residential Training)

The first phase consisted of a ten-day residential training programme conducted from 16.5.2025 to 25.5.2025 in the training hall of VK-AICYAM office, Bhubaneswar. This introductory orientation focused on building a foundational understanding among Samaj Prabodhaks regarding the objectives of project and broader importance of protecting Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

The training included discussions on:

- The concept and significance of indigenous knowledge
- The cultural diversity of tribal communities in Odisha
- The role of youth in promoting community leadership
- Methods of interacting respectfully with elders and knowledge holders
- Basic approaches to documentation and reporting

This phase also provided an opportunity for participants from different communities to interact with one another, thereby fostering a sense of collective identity and shared purpose.

Phase II: Field-Level Internship (30 Days)

The second phase of the training involved a thirty-day field-level internship from 29.5.2025 to 28.6.2025, during which the Saaj Prabodhaks returned to their respective villages and began interacting with members of their communities. This internship phase enabled them to:

- Observe local cultural practices in their everyday settings
- Interact with Elders & knowledge holders
- Identify potential knowledge domains within their communities
- Understand social dynamics & leadership structures within villages

Field internship was designed as a practical learning exercise that would allow Samaj Prabodhaks to apply the concepts introduced during the initial training while also gaining firsthand exposure to community realities.

Phase III: Advanced Orientation (5 Days – Residential Training)

Following the completion of field internship, the participants were brought together again for a five-day advanced orientation programme from 30.6.2025 to 4.7.2025. This phase focused on strengthening their understanding of experiences gained during field internship and refining their approach toward community engagement and knowledge documentation. Sessions during this phase encouraged reflection on field experiences, discussion of challenges encountered, and identification of strategies for strengthening their engagement with community members. This also enhanced their confidence in facilitating interactions within their communities and contributing effectively to project objectives. Detailed curriculum and schedule of these training programmes are provided in Annexure.

Advanced Reflection and Documentation Orientation during Third Phase Training

The third phase of the Samaj Prabodhak capacity-building process was designed as an advanced orientation programme with a strong emphasis on reflection, analytical learning, and strengthening the documentation abilities of the participating youth. While the earlier phases had focused on conceptual understanding and field exposure, this phase was intended to enable the Samaj Prabodhaks to critically assess their field experiences and refine their approach toward community engagement and knowledge

documentation. A central component of this phase was facilitating a structured process of self-assessment and reflective dialogue among the Samaj Prabodhaks. During the programme, participants were encouraged to openly discuss their field-level experiences gathered during the internship period in their respective communities. These discussions allowed them to reflect on the practical realities they encountered while interacting with elders, knowledge holders, youth, and other members of the community.

Particular emphasis was placed on helping the participants identify and articulate the hindrances, limitations, and shortcomings they experienced while undertaking their initial community engagement efforts. Through guided discussions, the Samaj Prabodhaks were encouraged to analyze the reasons behind such challenges, including gaps in their own understanding, communication barriers, social dynamics within the community, and other contextual factors that may influence community participation. This reflective process enabled the participants to develop a clearer understanding of the responsibilities associated with their role and also strengthened their capacity for self-evaluation and adaptive learning, which are essential qualities for community-based facilitators.

Collective Reflection - “Manas Manthan”

An important pedagogical element introduced during this phase was the process of collective brainstorming and reflective dialogue, referred to as “Manas Manthan.” This exercise aimed to deepen the intellectual engagement of the Samaj Prabodhaks with the cultural realities of their communities. Through these structured brainstorming sessions, participants were encouraged to revisit their field observations and share insights derived from their interactions with community members. The discussions helped them recognize the interconnected nature of various cultural practices and traditions within Janajati communities, and the manner in which these practices contribute to the broader social, cultural, and ecological life of the community.

The Manas Manthan sessions served several purposes:

- Enabling participants to consolidate their field experiences into coherent observations
- Encouraging analytical thinking regarding community traditions and practices
- Strengthening their ability to identify relevant themes for documentation
- Guide them to prepare systematic, meaningful documentation of indigenous knowledge practices

These collective deliberations also helped the Samaj Prabodhaks understand the importance of presenting their field observations in a structured and organized manner so that the information gathered could eventually contribute to reliable documentation and knowledge repositories.

Identification of Key Cultural Themes for Documentation

Based on the reflections shared by the Samaj Prabodhaks and the observations emerging from their field experiences, a set of thematic areas was identified for focused documentation. These themes were designed to capture essential dimensions of the cultural life of Janajati communities and to help the participants organize their documentation efforts in a systematic manner. The thematic areas were categorized into three broad domains that represent the fundamental structures of community life.

1. Jeevan Dhara (Life Cycle)

The first thematic domain focuses on the life cycle traditions of the community, encompassing cultural practices associated with different stages of human life. These traditions play an important role in shaping social identity, community relationships, and cultural continuity.

Key aspects identified under this category include:

- Child birth and associated customs
- Puberty and transition to adolescence
- Marriage and related rituals and social practices
- Family and community food traditions
- Health practices and traditional healing systems

These practices represent deeply rooted cultural systems that govern family life, social responsibilities, and community relationships.

2. Barshik Dhara (Annual Cycle)

The second thematic domain relates to the annual cycle of cultural and social practices that structure community life across seasons and festivals.

Important aspects included in this category are:

- Festivals and customary worship practices
- Social traditions and collective customs within communities
- Financial management practices within families and traditional coping mechanisms
- Community-level systems of financial management and mutual support
- Cultural practices observed within families and communities

These practices highlight how cultural traditions are interwoven with economic, social, ritual life of community.

3. Traditional Governance and Community Control Systems

The third thematic domain focuses on indigenous governance structures and customary systems of social regulation within Janajati communities.

This category includes:

- Cultural norms and traditional behavioral systems (Sanskar Vyavastha)
- Community decision-making processes and collective welfare mechanisms
- Traditional systems of dispute resolution and conflict management
- Family and domestic management practices
- Roles and responsibilities of men and women within the community
- Community administration and mechanisms for maintaining social harmony and well-being

These elements represent the institutional dimensions of indigenous communities and demonstrate how cultural norms guide social organization and governance.

Development of Theme based Structured Documentation Templates

In order to ensure systematic collection and presentation of information gathered from the field, a documentation template was developed and shared with the Samaj Prabodhaks. The objective of this template was to guide the participants in preparing structured documentation based on their observations and interactions within their communities. During the training sessions, the Samaj Prabodhaks were carefully oriented on each component of the documentation format so that they could understand the purpose of each section and the type of information required. The **DOCUMENTATION TEMPLATE** included the following:

1. Date of submission
2. Name of Samaj Prabodhak
3. Topic category
4. Topic title
5. Context of the topic
6. Objectives of documentation
7. Topic elaboration, including
 - expected output
 - working principles of the practice
 - preparation and processes involved in the activity
 - additional observations from the field
8. Identification of key contributors, including
 - knowledge holders
 - community elders
 - community members
9. Status of document preparation (completed, not completed, or under process)
10. Submission of draft document

Samaj Prabodhaks were given the flexibility to select topics of their own choice from the thematic areas identified earlier, depending on the relevance of the topic to their community and the accessibility of knowledge holders. This flexible approach ensured that the documentation process remained community-driven and context-sensitive, allowing each Samaj Prabodhak to focus on aspects most relevant to their own cultural environment.

Capacity Assessment

The entire exercise undertaken during this phase also functioned as a practical assessment of the strengths, limitations, and potential of each Samaj Prabodhak. Through the reflective discussions, documentation exercises, and analytical engagement with community themes, it became possible to assess the evolving capacity of the participants to function effectively in their roles. In many ways, this process served as a practical SWOT analysis of the Samaj Prabodhaks before they resumed their field-level engagement with their respective communities. The exercise helped identify areas where participants demonstrated confidence and clarity, as well as areas where further mentoring and support might be required.

Institutional Guidance and Leadership

The Director's efforts in developing documentation formats and providing detailed feedback to Samaj Prabodhaks were widely appreciated during the programme.

A significant contribution to this process came from Santosh Bhai, Director of the organization, whose thoughtful guidance and commitment played an important role in shaping the documentation framework used during training.

Through his guidance, the participants were able to better understand the importance of systematic documentation and value of presenting community knowledge in a structured and coherent manner. The Director's engagement reflected a strong institutional commitment to ensuring that the Samaj Prabodhaks were not only motivated to work with their communities but were also equipped with the intellectual and methodological tools required to contribute meaningfully to the preservation and documentation of indigenous knowledge traditions. His dedication to mentoring the participants and encouraging them to produce high-quality documentation for the benefit of their communities remains one of the notable strengths of this phase of the initiative.

Monitoring and Support Mechanism

The project design incorporated a regular monitoring and mentoring system intended to support the Samaj Prabodhaks throughout the implementation period.

✓ **Weekly Review and Online Interaction**

A system of weekly review meetings was established to assess field-level progress and address emerging challenges. These interactions were conducted online every Monday, enabling the Samaj Prabodhaks to share updates regarding their activities, experiences, and observations from their respective communities. To facilitate regular communication and coordination, a WhatsApp group was established on 23 May 2025, which enabled continuous interaction among Samaj Prabodhaks and with Project Director, the Secretary, and the Director of organization. Digital platform served as an important communication channel through which participants could share field experiences, raise queries, and receive guidance from project leadership.

✓ **Periodic Leadership Interaction**

While the weekly interactions were primarily coordinated by the Project Director, both the Secretary and the Director of the organization participated in the review sessions periodically, typically once every month. Their participation provided strategic guidance, encouragement to Samaj Prabodhaks, and an opportunity to review the overall direction of the initiative.

✓ **Field-Level Supervision**

Field-level supervision was primarily undertaken by Mr. Laxmi Bhai, who conducted visits to different project locations. During these visits, he interacted with the Samaj Prabodhaks as well as with community elders, local leaders, and knowledge holders. These field visits also included community meetings and discussions on issues related to cultural traditions, community leadership, and the importance of protecting indigenous knowledge practices.

✓ **Performance Review and Learning Assessment**

Periodic assessments were conducted to understand the evolving capacity, knowledge levels, and practical experiences of Samaj Prabodhaks. These reviews were based on their field observations, documentation efforts, and challenges they encountered while interacting with community members. Such reviews were intended to monitor performance and also to provide opportunities for collective learning and improvement.

Community Engagement Approach

Community engagement formed the central methodological pillar of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative. Since the project aimed to promote the protection and revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, it was essential that the activities be rooted within the social and cultural contexts of participating tribal communities.

Accordingly, Samaj Prabodhaks were encouraged to adopt an approach based on dialogue, participation, and cultural sensitivity while interacting with community members.

The engagement process involved:

- interacting with elders and traditional knowledge holders
- identifying individuals who possess valuable knowledge of cultural traditions
- facilitating informal discussions on community practices and oral traditions
- encouraging storytelling and sharing of cultural narratives
- creating opportunities for youth to learn about traditional practices

Through these interactions, the Samaj Prabodhaks gradually built relationships within their communities and initiated conversations around the importance of preserving cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge systems. The community engagement approach emphasized mutual respect and participatory learning, recognizing that the knowledge held by community members is both culturally sensitive and deeply rooted in social relationships. Rather than imposing external frameworks of documentation, the project sought to create conditions in which communities themselves could reflect upon and share their cultural knowledge.

Methodological Orientation of the Programme

In summary, the design and methodology of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative combined elements of:

- community-based leadership development
- participatory cultural documentation
- youth engagement and mentoring
- intergenerational dialogue

By integrating these components, the project aimed to create a platform through which communities could rediscover, document, and celebrate their indigenous knowledge traditions while simultaneously nurturing a new generation of culturally conscious community leaders.

Chapter 07: IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The implementation of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative was undertaken with the objective of promoting community-based leadership for safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge Systems among selected Janajati communities of Odisha. The project design envisioned the creation of a network of trained youth facilitators who would work closely with their respective communities to encourage documentation of traditional knowledge, strengthen cultural awareness, and promote intergenerational knowledge exchange.

The implementation phase involved deploying trained Samaj Prabodhaks within their communities, initiating community engagement activities, facilitating cultural interactions, and encouraging documentation of indigenous traditions. While the project began with a comprehensive plan of activities, the actual implementation unfolded within complex social realities that influenced the pace and scope of field-level actions. The following sections describe the major components of the implementation process.

➤ Filed Level Understanding and Activities Planning

The initial phase of implementation was marked by a deliberate effort to develop a nuanced understanding of the field realities within which the Samaj Prabodhaks were expected to operate. Although the project design had outlined a comprehensive set of activities, it was recognized early on that effective implementation would depend on aligning these plans with the socio-cultural context of each community.

Accordingly, it was decided to encourage Samaj Prabodhaks to begin their engagement with a process of observation, interaction, and situational assessment within their respective villages. This involved familiarizing themselves with community structures, identifying key influencers, understanding cultural practices, and assessing the level of awareness and interest among community members - particularly youth. Based on these insights, localized activity planning gradually evolved. Rather than strictly adhering to pre-defined schedules, the approach allowed flexibility for Samaj Prabodhaks to prioritize activities that were contextually relevant and practically feasible. This adaptive planning process enabled them to identify appropriate entry points for engagement - such as community gatherings, festivals, informal meetings, and interactions with elders.

At the same time, this phase also revealed certain practical limitations, including variations in the capacity of Prabodhaks, constraints of time and resources, and differing levels of community responsiveness. However, these challenges contributed to a more grounded understanding of field dynamics and helped shape a realistic and responsive implementation strategy.

➤ Availability and Deployment of Samaj Prabodhaks

At the beginning of the implementation phase, twenty Samaj Prabodhaks were deployed, representing ten Janajati communities across different districts of Odisha. In line with the project design, two youth representatives were selected from each of the Janajati communities namely Juanga, Bathudi, Sabara, Bhuyan, Munda, Santal, Gond, Kondha, Kisan and Paroja. These individuals had earlier undergone the structured training and orientation process designed to prepare them for their roles as community facilitators. The intention was that each Samaj Prabodhak would work closely within their own community to identify knowledge holders, facilitate cultural interactions, and contribute to documentation efforts.

However, as the implementation phase progressed, several contextual factors influenced the continuity of participation among the Samaj Prabodhaks. Due to livelihood pressures, migration patterns, personal responsibilities, and varying levels of commitment and preparedness, a number of participants were unable to sustain their active engagement with the project over an extended period. As a result, the number of actively functioning Samaj Prabodhaks gradually reduced, and eventually five participants continued to remain consistently engaged in the initiative. While this reduction affected the pace and frequency of certain planned activities, the remaining Samaj Prabodhaks continued to carry forward the initiative within their respective communities with dedication and growing interest.

➤ Interaction with Community

Interaction with the community formed the core of the implementation process and served as the primary medium through which the objectives of the initiative were pursued. The role of the Samaj Prabodhaks was

fundamentally relational, requiring them to establish trust, build rapport, and sustain meaningful engagement with different sections of the community. In practice, this interaction took multiple forms - ranging from informal conversations with elders and knowledge holders to participation in community events, cultural gatherings, and local forums. These engagements provided opportunities for dialogue on traditions, practices, and the relevance of indigenous knowledge in contemporary life. A significant aspect of this process was the continuous effort to connect with key stakeholders such as traditional leaders, healers, storytellers, women knowledge holders, and youth groups. Through these interactions, Samaj Prabodhaks were able to gradually facilitate an environment where community members felt encouraged to share their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.

While structured meetings and organized sessions were part of the plan, a substantial portion of engagement occurred through informal and situational interactions. This was particularly important in contexts where community participation depended on trust, familiarity, and cultural sensitivity. Despite certain constraints - such as limited frequency of large-scale meetings and variations in participation levels - the sustained presence and engagement of Samaj Prabodhaks helped maintain continuity in the process. These interactions not only contributed to awareness generation but also laid the foundation for subsequent activities related to mobilization, identification of knowledge holders, and documentation of indigenous traditions.

➤ Awareness Meetings and Community Mobilization

As part of the implementation process, several awareness meetings and community mobilization efforts were undertaken to introduce the objectives of the project and encourage community participation. A significant role in organizing and facilitating these meetings was played by Mr. Laxmi Bhai, the Secretary of the organization, who has longstanding relationships with community leaders and grassroots networks across various districts. His presence and guidance were instrumental in mobilizing community participation and explaining the purpose of the initiative to elders, youth groups, and other stakeholders.

However, during the implementation period, the Secretary experienced prolonged health challenges, which limited his ability to travel extensively and supervise field-level activities. As a result, the number of planned awareness meetings and community camps could not be conducted at the intended scale. Despite these limitations, the Samaj Prabodhaks continued to maintain communication with community members through smaller gatherings, visits to villages, and participation in local cultural events. These engagements allowed them to sustain the momentum of community dialogue and maintain connections with elders and knowledge holders. In several cases, Samaj Prabodhaks also interacted with local authorities and officials from relevant line departments while participating in community-level events, thereby expanding the network of stakeholders engaged in discussions on indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions.

➤ Identification of Local Knowledge Holders

From the beginning of the project, Samaj Prabodhaks were encouraged to identify and interact with local knowledge holders within their communities. Training sessions had earlier prepared them to approach such individuals respectfully, record their experiences, and document their contributions to community well-being. Through field interactions, Samaj Prabodhaks could remain engaged with a diverse group of traditional practitioners, including:

- community elders
- traditional healers
- storytellers and folk singers
- ritual practitioners
- agricultural knowledge holders

Many of these individuals were invited to participate in institutional events organized by the organization, including the Traditional Healers Conference held on 2–3 November 2025 and the Foundation Day celebrations held from 10–12 January 2026. These events created platforms for knowledge holders to share their experiences and present evidence of their traditional practices. In particular, more than 40 traditional healers from different parts of Odisha participated, presenting case histories and citing examples of treatments provided within their communities.

Some of these healers also operate community-based healing centers, where people from different regions and even neighboring states seek treatment - based on traditional medicinal knowledge. The participation of these practitioners not only enriched the discussions during the events but also highlighted the continuing relevance of indigenous knowledge systems in supporting community health and well-being.

➤ **Documentation of Indigenous Traditions**

One of the major objectives of the project was the documentation of indigenous knowledge practices across different Janajati communities. Under the guidance of the Project Director and the institutional leadership of the organization, the Samaj Prabodhaks began preparing documentation on various cultural themes identified during the training phase. Although the overall number of completed documents remained lower than originally anticipated primarily due to the reduction in the number of active Samaj Prabodhaks - the process nonetheless generated important learning experiences.

The documentation efforts involved:

- interacting with community elders and traditional practitioners
- collecting narratives related to cultural practices and rituals
- recording oral traditions and community histories
- identifying significant events and practices within community life

Over time, the Samaj Prabodhaks demonstrated increasing interest and confidence in the documentation process. Their repeated interactions with elders, storytellers, and knowledge holders helped them refine their understanding of cultural traditions and encouraged them to continue preparing written accounts based on their observations and discussions.

An encouraging development was that several Samaj Prabodhaks also prepared reflective articles based on their experiences and knowledge gained during the project. These articles were published in the organization's annual journal "AICYAM," which was released on 10 January 2026 during the celebration of the organization's Pratistha Diwas (Foundation Day). Moreover, the publication of these writings provided a platform for the Samaj Prabodhaks to share their insights and also served as a motivating factor for further documentation efforts. In this context, the guidance of the Project Director is noteworthy.

➤ **Storytelling and Oral Tradition Initiatives**

An important dimension of the implementation process involved promoting the documentation and revival of oral traditions, including folk narratives (Lok Katha) and folk songs (Lok Geet). The Samaj Prabodhaks actively participated in community programmes organized by Janajati Maha Sanghs at block and district levels, where they interacted with elders, youth, and women who were actively engaged in preserving cultural traditions. Particular emphasis was placed on engaging women storytellers, who play a vital role in transmitting cultural narratives within families and communities. Through informal gatherings and community-level sessions, several storytelling events were organized where community members could share traditional stories and songs. A notable milestone in this effort was the organization of a special session on Oral Traditions during the Foundation Day celebrations of the organization on 12 January 2026. This event brought together participants from different parts of Odisha, including elders, youth, women storytellers, and traditional knowledge holders.

During the programme:

- 27 knowledge holders participated, presenting their experiences and cultural narratives.
- 13 Lok Katha and Lok Geet performances were presented on the stage.

These presentations highlighted the richness of oral traditions within tribal communities and created an opportunity for wider recognition of cultural knowledge holders.

➤ **Emerging Momentum**

Despite the various constraints encountered during implementation, the Samaj Prabodhak initiative has succeeded in initiating important processes of community engagement, cultural dialogue, and documentation. The remaining Samaj Prabodhaks continued to demonstrate commitment to the initiative and remain actively engaged with their communities. As the project approaches the later stages of its implementation period, there is optimism that additional documentation and community interactions will continue to emerge from the ongoing efforts of these youth leaders. The experiences gained during this phase have also generated

valuable insights that will inform future initiatives aimed at strengthening community leadership for the protection and promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Other than arranging Training [First phase for 10 days], Orientation [field-based – for 30 days] and Advanced knowledge input [Advanced stage of Training for 5 days] – few events been arranged during the period of project implementation that not only inspired involvement of Samaj Prabodhaks but also improved their knowledge intake, showcased their proficiency in event and session management as well as pursuing objective oriented activity through proper involvement of community members in meaningful manner.

This included:

(a) YUVA SAMMELAN at SOA Deemed University Campus, Bhubaneswar (29th Sept. to 1st Oct. 2025)

A three-day Yuva Sammelan (Youth Conference) was organized at the SUM Hospital Campus of SOA Deemed University, Bhubaneswar, from 29th September to 1st October 2025. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of more than 500 students and youth representatives from all 30 districts of Odisha, making it a vibrant platform for collective learning and inspiration.

The conference focused on nurturing a positive and transformative mindset among youth, with particular emphasis on the theme of “making the impossible possible.” Through a series of interactive sessions, motivational inputs, and group engagements, participants were encouraged to develop confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose in addressing contemporary challenges.

Active members of VK-AICYAM, Samaj Prabodhaks, social reform-oriented youth, and associates of the Vivekananda Kendra took part in the Sammelan, contributing to a rich exchange of ideas and experiences. A key highlight of the event was the presence of Shri Hanumant Rao, Vice President of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, who addressed the gathering and inspired the youth to awaken their inner potential and dedicate themselves towards nation-building.

(b) TRADITIONAL HEALERS' CONFERENCE on 2nd and 3rd November 2025

A two-day Traditional Healers' Conference was arranged from 2nd to 3rd November 2025, bringing together traditional healing practitioners from various districts of Odisha. The conference served as a unique platform for the exchange of indigenous knowledge related to community-based healing practices.

The primary focus of the conference was to explore and understand how various ailments are treated within tribal communities using natural medicinal plants, roots, herbs, and forest-based resources. Traditional healers shared their experiential knowledge and demonstrated the use of different medicinal plants and vines that form the basis of their healing practices. The event facilitated meaningful dialogue, enabling participants to learn about the principles, processes, and effectiveness of traditional healing systems. It also provided an opportunity for Samaj Prabodhaks and other participants to interact directly with knowledge holders, thereby strengthening their understanding and appreciation of indigenous health practices.

Overall, the conference emerged as a significant step towards recognizing, documenting, and promoting traditional healing knowledge as an integral part of the broader indigenous knowledge system.

(c) CELEBRATION OF FOUNDATION DAY OF THE ORGANIZATION (10th – 12th January 2026)

Foundation Day of the organization was celebrated from 10th to 12th January 2026, coinciding with Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda on 12th January. Occasion was marked by a series of meaningful activities aimed at promoting cultural awareness and revitalizing indigenous knowledge systems. As part of celebration, a two-day workshop was organized focusing on Indian culture and traditional knowledge within tribal communities.

The event witnessed active participation from tribal representatives - men and women from various districts of Odisha, creating a vibrant and inclusive platform for cultural exchange.

✓ **Tribal Traditional Healers – Demonstrative Programme:**

A dedicated session was organized wherein traditional healers from different tribal communities presented live demonstrations of their healing practices. Through practical illustrations and case-based explanations, they showcased the use of medicinal plants, roots, and herbal formulations in treating various ailments. This interactive platform enabled participants, including Samaj Prabodhaks, to directly observe indigenous

healing methods, engage with practitioners, and gain deeper insights into the principles and efficacy of traditional health systems. The session significantly contributed to strengthening confidence in community-based healing knowledge and its relevance in present times.

✓ **Programme on Tribal Oral Traditions – Lok Katha and Lok Geet:**

A vibrant programme on tribal oral traditions was conducted, focusing on Lok Katha (folk stories) and Lok Geet (folk songs). Knowledge holders, women storytellers, and cultural practitioners from various communities shared traditional narratives and songs that reflect the history, values, beliefs, and collective memory of their societies.

The sessions not only revived interest in oral traditions but also created a platform for intergenerational knowledge exchange, with active participation from youth. This initiative played a vital role in preserving intangible cultural heritage while fostering cultural pride and continuity among the participating communities. The cultural segment of the program featured performances such as Chau dance, Shiva Tandava, and Traditional Tribal Songs and Dances, reflecting the depth and diversity of indigenous cultural expressions. These performances not only enriched the event but also reinforced a sense

IT IS PERTINENT TO NOTE HERE THAT

The organization of Traditional Healers' Conference on 2nd and 3rd November 2025 emerged as a thoughtful and strategic intervention within the broader framework of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative. It was not merely an event, but a carefully envisioned platform to connect lived traditional knowledge with structured community processes. The following perspectives may be articulated:

1) Rationale Behind the Arrangement

The idea of organizing the conference was grounded in the realization that a vast repository of indigenous healing knowledge exists within communities, yet remains largely undocumented, fragmented, and at risk of gradual erosion. While Samaj Prabodhaks were in the process of identifying and interacting with knowledge holders, there was a felt need to create a collective platform where such practitioners could come together, share, and validate their knowledge. It was also recognized that many traditional healers operate in isolation, with limited opportunities for cross-learning or recognition. The conference thus served as a convergence space, bridging gaps between practitioners, communities, and the project framework.

2) Core Focus of the Conference

The central focus was to:

- ✓ Highlight traditional healing practices as an integral component of indigenous knowledge systems
- ✓ Enable demonstration-based learning, where healers could showcase their methods, materials and approaches
- ✓ Encourage interactive dialogue, allowing participants to raise queries and understand the rationale behind practices
- ✓ Promote credibility and visibility of traditional healers within and beyond their communities

3) Objectives and Purpose

The conference was guided by multiple interrelated objectives:

- ✓ Documentation Facilitation: To support Samaj Prabodhaks in identifying authentic practices and gathering first-hand information
- ✓ Knowledge Validation: To create a space where repetition can lead to exploring more and better knowledge and results

4) Contribution of the Conference to Samaj Prabodhak Project Deliverables

The Traditional Healers' Conference contributed directly and substantively to multiple deliverables of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative:

- ✓ Strengthening Documentation Outputs:

The live demonstrations and interactions provided Samaj Prabodhaks with first-hand, verifiable knowledge, improving both the quality and authenticity of documentation related to traditional healing practices.

- ✓ Facilitating Identification of Knowledge Holders:

The conference acted as a centralized platform for mapping and profiling traditional practitioners, thereby accelerating one of the core project outcomes.

✓ **Enhancing Youth Learning and Exposure:**

Samaj Prabodhaks and other youth participants gained practical insights, moving beyond theoretical understanding to experiential learning.

✓ **Promoting Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer:**

The interaction between elders (healers) and youth helped create live channels of knowledge transmission, aligning strongly with the project's preservation goals.

✓ **Supporting Community Engagement Targets:**

The event brought together diverse stakeholders, thereby strengthening community-level participation, trust, and ownership.

✓ **Contributing to Dissemination Goals:**

The conference itself functioned as a knowledge dissemination platform, complementing future outputs such as booklets and repositories.

5) Perspectives Created Through the Conference

The conference generated several important perspectives:

✓ **Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge as Practical and Relevant:**

Participants witnessed that traditional healing is not merely cultural memory but a functional and result-oriented system.

✓ **Renewed Respect for Knowledge Holders:**

The visibility and acknowledgment accorded to healers helped restore their social dignity and relevance.

✓ **Shift in Youth Perception:**

Youth, including Samaj Prabodhaks, began to see indigenous practices as worthy of learning, preserving, and promoting.

✓ **Understanding the Need for Systematic Documentation:**

The diversity and depth of practices highlighted the urgency of structured recording and preservation.

✓ **Emergence of a Collective Knowledge Ecosystem:**

The event fostered a sense that knowledge is not isolated but shared, interconnected, and community-owned.

6) Rationale for Repetition During the Annual Day Celebration

The decision to invite traditional healers again during the Annual Day Celebration reflects a deliberate institutional strategy, rather than a one-time event repetition.

✓ **Reinforcing Continuity and Commitment:**

Re-engagement signaled that the organization views traditional knowledge as a core thematic priority, not an episodic activity.

✓ **Expanding Reach and Visibility:**

The Annual Day platform brought a wider and more diverse audience, including dignitaries, researchers, and participants from different regions.

✓ **Providing Recognition and Motivation to Healers:**

Repeated invitations validated contributions of healers, encouraging them to share more openly, confidently.

✓ **Creating Deeper Learning Opportunities:**

Participants who may have missed earlier interactions gained exposure, while others benefited from continued engagement and deeper understanding.

✓ **Strengthening the Role of Samaj Prabodhaks:**

The presence of healers in multiple forums enabled Prabodhaks to build sustained relationships, crucial for long-term documentation and collaboration.

✓ **Showcasing Evidence of Impact:**

Demonstrations, case discussions, and sharing of milestones by healers served as living proof of the relevance and effectiveness of indigenous practices.

➤ Looking Ahead

Building upon these experiences, the organization may consider the following strategic outlook for the coming year and beyond:

1. Institutionalizing Knowledge Platforms

Move from one-time events to structured, periodic knowledge forums such as:

- ✓ Annual or bi-annual Traditional Knowledge Conclaves

- ✓ Thematic workshops (healing, agriculture, rituals, etc.)
- 2. Systematic Documentation and Archiving**
- ✓ Develop standardized documentation protocols for traditional healing practices
- ✓ Create a digital and physical knowledge repository accessible for future learning and research
- 3. Strengthening Samaj Prabodhak Capacities**
- ✓ Provide focused training on documenting oral knowledge, especially in translating the oral narratives into written formats
- ✓ Encourage audio-visual documentation methods to complement written records
- 4. Building Networks of Knowledge Holders**
- ✓ Create a directory or network of traditional healers and practitioners
- ✓ Facilitate peer learning among healers themselves, enabling cross-community exchange
- 5. Recognition and Ethical Engagement**
- ✓ Establish systems for honoring knowledge holders at community and institutional levels
- ✓ Ensure that documentation and dissemination are guided by respect, consent, and cultural sensitivity
- 6. Linking with Broader Development and Research Platforms**
- ✓ Explore partnerships with research institutions, health practitioners, and cultural organizations
- ✓ Position indigenous knowledge within broader discussions on sustainable health, community well-being
- 7. Promoting Youth Engagement**
- ✓ Encourage youth to take up apprenticeship-based learning with traditional healers
- ✓ Integrate storytelling, case documentation, and field immersion as regular components of engagement

Concluding Perspective

The Traditional Healers' Conference has demonstrated that when given the right platform, indigenous knowledge systems reveal their depth, relevance, and vitality. For the Samaj Prabodhak initiative, such engagements not only strengthen immediate deliverables but also lay the foundation for a long-term, community-driven movement of knowledge preservation, validation, and transmission. With sustained effort and thoughtful expansion, this approach holds the potential to evolve into a replicable model of integrating traditional wisdom with contemporary development discourse.

Chapter 08: IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND INFLUENCING FACTORS

➤ In the context of Samaj Prabodhak Activities

While the Samaj Prabodhak initiative generated encouraging engagement within communities and laid the foundation for strengthening youth-led cultural documentation, the implementation process also encountered several challenges. These challenges emerged from a combination of operational, socio-economic, and contextual factors, which influenced the pace and scale of project activities. Understanding these challenges is important not only for interpreting the outcomes of the current initiative but also for refining future strategies aimed at promoting community leadership for the protection of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

1. Limited Field Mobility and Supervisory Constraints

One of the significant operational challenges during the implementation period was the limited field mobility and supervision due to the prolonged illness of the Secretary, whose active engagement was initially envisioned as an important source of guidance and mentoring for Samaj Prabodhaks. Given the dispersed geographical locations of the participating communities, regular field visits and continuous mentoring were necessary to sustain the momentum of activities. The temporary limitation in field supervision affected the frequency of interactions with the Samaj Prabodhaks and slowed the pace of monitoring and coordination.

2. Socio-Economic Realities of Participating Youth

Most of the Samaj Prabodhaks belong to rural and tribal households where livelihood responsibilities, family obligations and seasonal work patterns are an integral part of everyday life. For many participants, engagement with project had to be balanced alongside agricultural activities, wage labour & other household responsibilities. In several cases, these socio-economic realities limited amount of time participants could consistently devote to project-related activities such as documentation, community interaction and reporting.

3. Migration and Mobility within Communities

Seasonal migration and livelihood mobility within tribal communities also influenced the continuity of project engagement. In some cases, family members of the Samaj Prabodhaks migrated temporarily in search of employment, which created additional responsibilities for the youth remaining in the household. Similarly, migration among community members sometimes affected the availability of traditional knowledge holders, elders, and practitioners who were expected to participate in documentation and dialogue processes.

4. Initial Hesitation in Sharing Traditional Knowledge

Another important challenge related to the sensitive nature of indigenous knowledge within communities. Traditional knowledge systems are often transmitted within trusted social networks and may not always be readily shared in formal documentation processes. Some elders and knowledge holders initially expressed hesitation in sharing certain practices, particularly those associated with ritual traditions, healing methods, or sacred cultural beliefs. Building trust and encouraging open dialogue required time, repeated interactions, and respectful engagement.

5. Capacity and Learning Curve of First-Generation Community Researchers

The Samaj Prabodhaks were selected from among community youth who had limited prior exposure to activities such as structured documentation, interviewing knowledge holders, or preparing written records of cultural practices. Although training programmes introduced them to these skills, developing confidence and proficiency in applying them in real field situations required sustained mentoring and practice. The process of nurturing these youth as first-generation community researchers naturally involved a learning curve that influenced the pace of documentation activities.

6. Environmental and Seasonal Constraints

In rural and tribal regions, environmental and seasonal conditions often influence availability of community members for meetings and interactions. Agricultural seasons, festivals, and occasional climatic disturbances affected the scheduling of some planned activities and interactions with knowledge holders. Such contextual factors required flexibility in planning and occasionally delayed certain activities that depended on the availability of community participants.

7. Limited Experience in Digital Documentation

Another emerging challenge was the limited familiarity of some participants with digital tools required for documentation and communication. Although basic training in computer use and photography was provided, regular practice and technical guidance were necessary for participants to confidently use these tools for recording and sharing information. This experience highlighted the importance of strengthening digital literacy components in future training programmes.

Reflective Perspective

While these challenges influenced the pace of implementation, they also provided valuable insights into the practical realities of nurturing youth leadership and documenting indigenous knowledge within community settings. Rather than being viewed as obstacles alone, these experiences have helped the organization better understand the social, cultural, and institutional factors that shape community-based initiatives. The lessons emerging from these challenges will play an important role in strengthening future efforts aimed at empowering community youth as custodians and facilitators of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

➤ In the context of Traditional Healers Conference

The organization of the Traditional Healers' Conference, while highly enriching in its outcomes, involved several operational, contextual, and process-oriented challenges that merit reflection.

a) Identification and Mobilization of Traditional Healers

Many traditional healers operate within **localized and informal networks**, often without formal recognition or documentation. Identifying such practitioners across geographically dispersed areas required **extensive field-level coordination** and reliance on personal networks, including those of the Samaj Prabodhaks.

b) Trust-Building and Willingness to Participate

Traditional healers are often cautious in sharing their knowledge, as it is considered:

- Sacred
- Lineage-based
- Community-specific

Convincing them to participate in a public forum and demonstrate their practices required sensitive engagement, reassurance, and ethical clarity regarding the **purpose of knowledge sharing, respect for cultural ownership, informed consent, and the non-exploitative use of their traditional wisdom.**

HOWEVER, IT IS PERTINENT TO NOTE HERE THAT

Traditional Healers' Conference created a significant opportunity for exposure, learning, and mutual recognition among practitioners who otherwise function largely within localized and often isolated contexts. Participation in the conference enabled healers to step beyond their immediate community settings and engage with a wider network of practitioners, stakeholders, and knowledge systems.

One of the most notable impacts was the opportunity for **cross-learning among healers from different parts of Odisha**. Interactions with peers allowed them to exchange experiences, compare healing practices, and understand variations in the use of medicinal plants, preparation methods, and treatment approaches. This not only enriched their own knowledge base but also reinforced the diversity and depth of indigenous healing traditions.

The conference also facilitated **exposure to a broader spectrum of stakeholders**, including researchers, institutional representatives, and informed observers. Such engagement helped traditional healers gain a clearer understanding of how their knowledge is perceived beyond the community level and the potential avenues through which it can be documented, validated, and meaningfully positioned within wider knowledge and health discourses.

Importantly, this exposure contributed to a **renewed sense of confidence & recognition** among the healers. Demonstrating their practices in a public and interactive forum validated their role as knowledge holders and custodians of traditional health systems. It also encouraged greater openness in sharing knowledge, while simultaneously emphasizing importance of ethical safeguards in its documentation and use. At the same time, interactions brought forward a **realistic appreciation of existing limitations and emerging**

challenges. Healers reflected on constraints such as the declining availability of medicinal plants, ecological changes, and the growing dominance of allopathic and other modern systems of treatment. This created a space for critical reflection on how traditional practices can sustain relevance in a changing health landscape. Beyond immediate learning outcomes, **the conference also opened important pathways for advancing the vision and objectives of the Samaj Prabodhak Programme.** The interface between traditional healers and Samaj Prabodhaks created opportunities for **structured knowledge linkage**, where youth facilitators could systematically document healing practices with greater authenticity and depth.

The exposure further indicated the potential for developing **community-based knowledge networks**, connecting healers across regions and enabling periodic exchange, mentoring, and collaborative learning. Such networks can serve as living platforms for sustaining indigenous health knowledge while strengthening its visibility and credibility.

In addition, the conference highlighted the scope for **integrating traditional healing knowledge into broader documentation, research, and awareness initiatives** under the programme. This includes developing community archives, thematic documentation on medicinal practices, and creating platforms where such knowledge can be responsibly shared with wider audiences.

The experience also points towards the need for **ecological and resource-linked interventions**, such as promoting the conservation and cultivation of medicinal plants, thereby addressing one of the key constraints identified by the healers themselves.

Several traditional healers shared encouraging examples of innovation and adaptation within their practice.

- ✓ Some have taken proactive steps to establish small medicinal plant gardens to ensure a more reliable supply of herbs, while others have strengthened patient care by organizing regular treatment services and even providing basic accommodation at affordable cost within their premises. These efforts reflect a gradual shift towards more structured and patient-oriented service delivery.
- ✓ Healers also highlighted how their work is increasingly being recognized and appreciated by the communities they serve, with growing trust and repeat engagement from patients. Such experiences indicate that, even within existing limitations, traditional healers are evolving their practices, setting meaningful milestones, and reinforcing the continued relevance of indigenous healing systems in the present context.

Overall, the conference acted not merely as a one-time event but as a **catalytic process**, enabling alignment between traditional knowledge holders and the Samaj Prabodhak framework. It strengthened the foundation for future actions that combine documentation, community engagement, and knowledge preservation - thereby advancing the programme's long-term vision of nurturing community-led systems for safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge.

Chapter 09: COMMITMENTS VERSUS REALIZATION

Understanding and Integrating Tangible and Intangible Dimensions

Presenting the results of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative in terms of both tangible and intangible aspects is not only methodologically sound but also essential to do justice to the nature of the intervention itself. While tangible outcomes such as the number of community meetings conducted, knowledge holders identified, documents prepared, and cultural events organized provide measurable evidence of progress, they capture only a partial picture of the initiative's impact. The core strength of this effort lies in its ability to influence perceptions, revive cultural consciousness, strengthen intergenerational dialogue and build confidence among community members outcomes that are inherently intangible yet far more enduring in their implications.

In the context of indigenous knowledge systems, where values, beliefs, practices, and identities are deeply embedded in lived experiences, transformative change often occurs subtly through shifts in attitudes and relationships rather than through immediate quantifiable outputs. Therefore, articulating both dimensions allows for a more holistic and credible representation of achievements, ensuring that the narrative reflects not just what has been *done*, but more importantly, what has been *initiated and internalized* within the community. Such a balanced approach also enables the project holder to better communicate impact to diverse stakeholders, while simultaneously laying a strong foundation for future scaling, policy engagement, and sustained community ownership.

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative, despite operating within a set of contextual and operational constraints, has generated a range of meaningful achievements and emerging outcomes. These outcomes are best understood not merely in quantitative terms but through a balanced appreciation of both tangible outputs and intangible transformations within communities. While the scale of activities was moderated due to field realities, the depth of engagement, gradual shifts in perception, and revival of cultural dialogue indicate that the initiative has laid a strong foundation for long-term community-based safeguarding of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

1. Community Mobilization and Awareness Building

Tangible Outcomes

- ✓ Organization of community-level meetings, informal gatherings, and participation in cultural events across multiple locations.
- ✓ Engagement of community members including elders, youth, women, and traditional leaders in discussions around cultural heritage.
- ✓ Participation of community representatives in key institutional events such as Foundation Day celebrations and thematic gatherings.

Intangible Outcomes

- ✓ Increased awareness and sensitivity towards cultural heritage among community members.
- ✓ Recognition of the importance of documenting traditions that were earlier considered part of routine life and therefore often overlooked.
- ✓ Strengthening of dialogue between generations particularly between elders and youth - on issues related to tradition, identity, and continuity.

Illustrative Example

In one of the villages, a Samaj Prabodhak initiated an informal evening gathering where elders began narrating stories related to traditional agricultural practices and seasonal rituals. What began as a small discussion gradually turned into a recurring interaction space, where youth started asking questions about the meaning and relevance of these practices. This reflects how simple, low-cost interventions created renewed community engagement around cultural knowledge.

2. Revitalization of Oral Traditions

Tangible Outcomes

- ✓ Organization of storytelling sessions at community level involving women storytellers, elders & the youth.
- ✓ Facilitation of Lok Katha (folk tales) and Lok Geet (folk songs) presentations during institutional events, particularly during the Foundation Day celebration.

- ✓ Documentation of selected narratives & cultural expressions thru' written formats & community interactions

Intangible Outcomes

- ✓ Revival of interest in oral traditions, especially among younger generations who had limited exposure to such practices.
- ✓ Repositioning of storytelling as a valuable cultural activity rather than a fading tradition.
- ✓ Recognition of women storytellers and folk artists as key custodians of cultural heritage.

Case Illustration

During the Foundation Day celebration in January 2026-27 knowledge holders presented 13 folk narratives and songs on stage. Many participants shared that it was the first time their traditional storytelling practices were recognized in a formal platform.

One elderly woman storyteller expressed that she had been narrating stories within her family for decades, but this was first occasion where her knowledge was publicly acknowledged. This event not only revived oral traditions but also restored dignity and recognition to cultural practitioners.

3. Identification and Recognition of Knowledge Holders

Tangible Outcomes

- ✓ Identification and interaction with a diverse group of knowledge holders including:
 - Traditional healers
 - Community elders
 - Ritual practitioners
 - Folk artists and storytellers
- Participation of over 40 traditional healers in institutional platforms such as the Traditional Healers Conference (November 2025) and subsequent events.
- Documentation of case histories, practices, and experiences shared by these practitioners.

Intangible Outcomes

- ✓ Enhanced visibility and recognition of local knowledge holders within and beyond their communities.
- ✓ Strengthening of community respect for traditional practitioners, particularly in the domain of healing and cultural practices.
- ✓ Renewed confidence among knowledge holders to share and preserve their practices.

Anecdotal Insight

Several traditional healers who participated in the conference shared documented evidence of their healing practices, including treatment of chronic ailments using herbal remedies. Some of them reported that people from neighboring districts and even other states visit their centres for treatment. Such interactions highlighted that indigenous knowledge systems continue to remain relevant and effective, even though they often function outside formal institutional recognition.

4. Youth Engagement and Participation

Tangible Outcomes

- ✓ Active involvement of youth as Samaj Prabodhaks in community interaction, documentation, and cultural activities.
- ✓ Participation of local youth in storytelling sessions, cultural programmes, and community gatherings.
- ✓ Contribution of articles and reflections by Samaj Prabodhaks in organization's annual journal "AICYAM."

Intangible Outcomes

- ✓ Increased curiosity and engagement among youth towards their own cultural heritage.
- ✓ Development of a sense of responsibility among participating youth as facilitators and knowledge intermediaries.
- ✓ Gradual emergence of youth leadership in promoting cultural awareness within communities.

Case Reflection

One of the Samaj Prabodhaks, who initially hesitated to interact with elders, gradually developed confidence through repeated field engagement. Over time, he not only conducted interviews with knowledge holders but also authored an article published in AICYAM. This transformation reflects the initiative's role in building youth capacity and confidence in cultural documentation.

5. Strengthening of Cultural Pride and Identity

Tangible Outcomes

- ✓ Organization of cultural events & platforms where traditional practices were showcased & discussed.
- ✓ Publication of community-based articles, documentation reflecting indigenous knowledge & practices
- ✓ Participation of community members in events that celebrated traditional knowledge systems.

Intangible Outcomes

- ✓ Renewed sense of cultural pride among community members, particularly among youth.
- ✓ Increased appreciation of indigenous practices related to health, food systems, rituals and social organization.
- ✓ Shift in perception from viewing traditional practices as outdated to recognizing them as valuable and relevant.

Illustrative Insight

During interactions, several youth participants expressed that prior to initiative, they perceived traditional practices as less important compared to modern lifestyles. However, after engaging with elders and participating in cultural sessions, they began to understand the scientific, ecological, and social relevance of these practices. This indicates a subtle yet significant shift in mindset, which is critical for long-term cultural preservation.

6. Documentation as a Learning and Reflective Process

Tangible Outcomes

- ✓ Submission of thematic documents by Samaj Prabodhaks on topics related to life cycle practices, annual cultural cycles, and traditional governance systems.
- ✓ Development and use of structured documentation templates to guide data collection and reporting.
- ✓ Publication of selected writings in the organization's annual journal.

Intangible Outcomes

- ✓ Improved documentation skills and analytical thinking among Samaj Prabodhaks.
- ✓ Emergence of a reflective approach where participants began to critically observe and interpret cultural practices.
- ✓ Creation of a preliminary knowledge base that can be further expanded in future phases.

7. Institutional Strengthening and Knowledge Visibility

Tangible Outcomes

- ✓ Successful organization of key events such as:
 - Traditional Healers Conference (November 2025)
 - Foundation Day Celebration (January 2026)
- ✓ Publication and dissemination of the annual journal AICYAM.

Intangible Outcomes

- ✓ Strengthening of organization's role as a facilitator of indigenous knowledge dialogue.
- ✓ Creation of platforms where community knowledge holders, youth and external stakeholders could interact.
- ✓ Enhanced visibility of the initiative among broader audiences including researchers and practitioners.

Concluding Perspective

The achievements of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative cannot be measured solely by the number of activities conducted or documents produced. Rather, its true significance lies in the processes it has initiated—processes of dialogue, recognition, reflection, and gradual cultural revitalization.

The initiative has:

- ✓ Rekindled conversations around cultural heritage
- ✓ Brought visibility to knowledge holders
- ✓ Encouraged youth participation
- ✓ Revived interest in oral traditions
- ✓ Strengthened community identity and pride

These outcomes, particularly the intangible ones, represent foundational shifts that are essential for sustaining Indigenous Knowledge Systems over time. While the journey is still evolving, the experiences gained so far clearly indicate that the Samaj Prabodhak model has the potential to develop into a replicable community-based framework for cultural preservation and knowledge transmission, provided it continues to build upon these early achievements with sustained engagement and institutional support.

✓ What Program Committed and Realized

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative was envisioned as a community-driven effort to nurture youth leadership for safeguarding and revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems among selected Janajati communities of Odisha. While the program committed to building a structured, community-based ecosystem for knowledge preservation through youth engagement, documentation, and intergenerational dialogue, its implementation despite time and operational limitations has resulted in a set of tangible and emerging outcomes. These outcomes reflect not only measurable progress but also important qualitative shifts within communities, indicating the early success of the program's foundational intent.

SI	Commitment	Realization
1	Developing Community-Based Youth Leadership	The program aimed to position local youth as cultural facilitators within their communities. This has been partially realized through the emergence of Samaj Prabodhaks who demonstrate increased cultural awareness, confidence, and engagement. Many participants have transitioned from passive observers to active facilitators of cultural dialogue, indicating the beginning of grassroots leadership rooted in indigenous traditions.
2	Initiating Systematic Documentation of Indigenous Knowledge	The initiative committed to establishing processes for documenting traditional knowledge. In practice, this has translated into the initial collection and recording of folklore, rituals, healing practices, and community narratives. While still evolving in quality and depth, these efforts have successfully introduced the culture of documentation within communities and laid the groundwork for more structured future outputs.
3	Strengthening Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange	A key program intent was to bridge the gap between elders and youth. This has been realized through facilitated interactions where knowledge holders shared insights on traditions, healing systems, and cultural practices. These engagements have revived channels of knowledge transmission that were gradually weakening, thereby reinforcing cultural continuity.
4	Building Community Awareness & Ownership of Indigenous Knowledge	The program sought to instill a sense of value and pride in indigenous knowledge systems. This has been reflected in increased awareness among community members regarding the relevance of their traditions in contemporary contexts - particularly in areas such as health, environment, and social cohesion. A gradual shift toward community recognition and ownership of knowledge assets is evident.
5	Identifying and Engaging Knowledge Holders	The initiative aimed to map and involve traditional knowledge custodians. This has been achieved through the identification of elders, healers, artisans, and storytellers across project locations. These individuals now form an emerging resource base for continued knowledge sharing, documentation, and mentoring.
6	Generating Institutional Learning for Replication and Scaling	The program intended to serve as a learning model for future interventions. Implementation has provided critical insights into field realities, including the need for sustained mentoring, adaptive planning, and deeper community engagement. These learnings are instrumental in refining future strategies and strengthening program design.

7	Establishing a Scalable Model for Community-Led Knowledge Preservation	The broader vision was to demonstrate a replicable model of community-led cultural preservation. The initiative has successfully validated the feasibility of the Samaj Prabodhak approach, showing that trained youth can engage communities, document traditions, and promote cultural awareness. Though at a nascent stage, it has created a strong foundation for expansion and long-term sustainability.
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Concluding Reflection

The program committed to initiating a transformative process rather than delivering immediate, large-scale outputs. In that context, its realizations - though foundational - are significant. The initiative has established early momentum in community engagement, youth leadership, and knowledge documentation. At the same time, it highlights the need for continued investment, mentoring, and time to translate these initial gains into a fully institutionalized and sustainable model. Overall, the Samaj Prabodhak initiative stands as a promising beginning - marking the transition from conceptual intent to grounded community action, and setting the stage for a deeper, long-term journey in strengthening community stewardship of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Chapter 10: COMMUNITY VOICE

1. Community Elder – Paudi Bhuyan [Bhanj Parial, 60, Damodargani, Telkoi – in personal interaction with Laxmi Bhai during village meeting]

ପୂର୍ବରୁ, ଆମର ପରମ୍ପରା କେବଳ ଆମର ଦୈନନ୍ଦିନ ଜୀବନର ଏକ ଅଂଶ ଥିଲା; ଆମେ କଦାଚିତ୍ ଭାବି ନ ଥିଲୁ ଯେ ଏହାକୁ ବ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟା କରିବା କିମ୍ବା ଲେଖିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ। କିନ୍ତୁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ସମାଜ ପ୍ରବୋଧକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ, ଆମେ ବୁଝି ପାରିଲୁ ଯେ ଯଦି ଆମେ ଏହି ଜ୍ଞାନକୁ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କୁ ନ ଜଣାଇବୁ, ତେବେ ଏହା ଆମ ପରେ ଲୋପ ପାଇଯିବ।

"Earlier, our traditions were just part of our daily life we never thought they needed to be explained or written down. But when the Samaj Prabodhak started asking questions, we realized that if we don't share this knowledge now, it may be lost with us."

2. Traditional Healer – Juang Community [Bairagi Juang, 55, Moraguda, Harichandanpur Block – Personal discussion with him after he attended Traditional Healers Conference]

ମୋ ପାଖକୁ ଲୋକେ ଚିକିତ୍ସା ପାଇଁ ଆସନ୍ତି କାରଣ ମୋର ବାପା ଓ ଜେଜେ ବାପା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏହି ପେଶାରେ ଥିଲେ। ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ, ମୁଁ କେବେ ମଧ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି ଲେଖି ନ ଥିଲି, କିନ୍ତୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ମୁଁ ଭାବୁଛି ଯେ ଆମର ପଦ୍ଧତିଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ସଠିକ୍ ଭାବରେ ରେକର୍ଡ୍ କରାଯିବା ଉଚିତ, ଯାହାଦ୍ୱାରା ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ପିଢ଼ୀ ଏସବୁର ମୂଲ୍ୟକୁ ବୁଝିପାରିବେ।

"People come to me for treatment as my father and grandfather practiced before me. I have never written anything, but now I feel that our methods should be recorded properly so that the next generation understands their value."

3. Woman Storyteller – Bathudi Community [Satabhama Naik, 45, Basantpur, Ghatagaon and in the Community Meeting held at Nudhuripada, Tarini Chhak, Ghatagaon.]

ମୁଁ ବର୍ଷ ବର୍ଷ ଧରି ମୋର ପରିବାରରେ ଶିଶୁମାନଙ୍କୁ କାହାଣୀ କହୁଛି। ପ୍ରଥମଥର ପାଇଁ, ମୋତେ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ସାମ୍ନାରେ ଏହି କାହାଣୀ କହିବାକୁ ଆମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ମିଳିଲା। ଏହା ମୋତେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଦେଲା ଯେ ଆମେ ଯାହା ଜାଣୁଛୁ, ସେହି ସବୁକିଛି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ବହୁତ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ।

"I have been telling stories to children in my family for many years. For the first time, I was invited to tell these stories in front of others. It gave me confidence that what we know is important for everyone."

4. Youth Participant – Paudi Bhuyan [Jaikarji, 37, Kadokala, Banshpal – During meeting with Youth group at Kadokala village]

ଆମେମାନେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ପୁରୁଣାକାଳିଆ ଓ ଆଜିର ଦିନରେ ବ୍ୟବହାରଯୋଗ୍ୟ ବୁଝି ବୋଲି ଭାବୁଥିଲୁ। କିନ୍ତୁ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଆମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ଆଲୋଚନା ପରେ, ବୁଝିପାରିଲୁ ଯେ ଏ ସବୁ ଆମମାନଙ୍କର ଦୈନନ୍ଦିନ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ ଆମ ଜୀବନଶୈଳୀ ସହିତ ପୁରାପୁରି ଭାବେ ଜଡ଼ିତ। ଏବେ ମୁଁ ଏସବୁ ଶିଖିବାରେ ଗର୍ବିତ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଛି।

"We used to think these customs are old and not useful today. But after interacting with elders, I understood that many of these practices are connected to nature and our way of living. Now I feel proud to learn them."

5. Samaj Prabodhak (Field Reflection) – Sri Krushna Chandra Naik, Bathudi Community

ଆରମ୍ଭରେ, ବୟସ୍କଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ଯାଇ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରିବା ଆମପାଇଁ କଠିନ ଥିଲା। କିନ୍ତୁ ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ, ସେମାନେ ଆମପ୍ରତି ଭରସା କରିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ। ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସେମାନେ ସ୍ୱୟଂ ଆମକୁ ଡାକି, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଅନୁଭବସବୁ ଆମକୁ କହୁଛନ୍ତି, ଯାହା ଫଳରେ ଆମ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟର ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱ ବୃଦ୍ଧି ପାଇବାରେ ଲାଗିଛି।

"Initially, it was difficult to approach elders and ask them questions. But gradually, they started trusting us. Now they themselves call us and share their experiences, which makes our work meaningful."

6. Community Woman Storyteller – Juang [Lsabati Juang, 50, Alanga, Harichandanpur Block, In a meeting with Women Storyteller in their village]

ଆମ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟର ମହିଳାମାନେ ଖାଦ୍ୟ, ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ, ଏବଂ ରୀତିନୀତି ସହିତ ସଂପୃକ୍ତ ବହୁତ ପାରମ୍ପରିକ ଜ୍ଞାନ ଜାଣିଛନ୍ତି । ସମାଜ ପ୍ରବୋଧକ ପ୍ରୋଜେକ୍ଟ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆମର ଏହି ଜ୍ଞାନରେ ସହଭାଗୀ କରିବା ଏବଂ ବିଶେଷକରି ଯୁବତୀମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଏହାର ପ୍ରସାର କରିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ଦେଇଛି ।

"Women in our community carry a lot of traditional knowledge related to food, health, and rituals. This initiative has given us a chance to share and pass it on, especially to young girls."

7. Ritual Practitioner – Bathudi Community Athar Deola Dehury Sri Kaibalya Naik, 57 Jhumukakudur, Karnajia, Mayurbhanj during Community Meeting at Karanjia, Mayurbhanj district

ଆମର ପାରମ୍ପରିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଳାପଗୁଡ଼ିକ କେବଳ ପ୍ରଥା ନୁହେଁ; ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଆମର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଏବଂ ସାମାଜିକ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳା ସହିତ ଜଡ଼ିତ । ଯେତେବେଳେ ଏଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଲେଖାଯାଇ ରଖାଯିବ, ଲୋକେ ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱକୁ ବୁଝିପାରିବେ ।

"Our rituals are not just customs; they are connected to our beliefs and community discipline. When these are documented, people will understand their purpose and importance."

8. Young Samaj Prabodhak – Juang – Prabhakar Juanga, 51, Binida, Ghatagaon

କିପରି ଯୈର୍ଯ୍ୟର ସହ ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ହେବ ଓ ଆମର ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ଗଭୀରଭାବେ ବୁଝିବାକୁ ହେବ - ସେସବୁ ଏହି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ, ମୁଁ ଶିଖିଛି । ଏହା ମୋତେ ମୋର ସମାଜ ଓ ମୋର ନିଜ ପରିଚୟକୁ ପରଖିବାର ଢଙ୍ଗରେ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆଣିପାରିଛି ।

"Through this work, I have learned how to listen patiently and understand our own culture deeply. It has changed the way I look at my community and my own identity."

9. Elder Knowledge Holder – Paudi Bhuyan Ballabh Naik, 64, Damjorgani, Telkoi – while in personal interaction with Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Dehury and Satyajit Sanangi at village on Role and Involvement of Youth in Protection/Promotion of Traditional Culture.

ପୂର୍ବରୁ, କେବଳ କିଛି ଲୋକଙ୍କର ଆମପାଖରୁ ଶିଖିବାରେ ରୁଚି ଥିଲା । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ, ଆମର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟାକୁ ଦେଖି, ଅନେକ ଯୁବକ ଓ ଯୁବତୀ ଆଗକୁ ଆସି ଆମ କାମରେ ସାମିଲ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି । ଏହା ଆମକୁ ଆଶା ଦେଇଛି ଯେ ଆମର ପରମ୍ପରା ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଜାରି ରହିବ ।

"Earlier, only a few people were interested in learning from us. Now, because of these efforts, more youth are coming forward. This gives us hope that our traditions will continue."

10. Folk Singer – Bathudi Community Smt. Kanchan Naik, 45, Patana [Basantpur] during discussion with Women Story tellers at village level.

ଆମର ଗୀତରେ ଆମର ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ପୂର୍ବଜ, ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଏବଂ ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣି ବିଷୟରେ କଥା ରହିଛି । ଯେତେବେଳେ ଆମେ ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ଗାଇଲୁ, ଲୋକମାନେ ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ପସନ୍ଦକଲେ । ଏହା ଆମକୁ ଅନୁଭବ କରାଇଲା ଯେ ଆମର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଏବେପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୂଲ୍ୟବାନ ।

"Our songs carry stories of our ancestors, forests, and festivals. When we sang them during the programme, people appreciated them. It made us feel that our culture still has value."

Chapter 11: EXPANDING THE HORIZON – NEAR TERM AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

The present status of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative marked by gradual community engagement, revival of cultural dialogue, identification of knowledge holders, and growing youth participation opens up a significant and forward-looking scope for deeper and more structured interventions. The current phase of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative reflects a gradual yet meaningful transition from introduction to acceptance within the community ecosystem. The progress achieved in terms of community engagement, revival of cultural dialogue, identification of knowledge holders, and increasing participation of youth indicates that the initiative has begun to take root at the grassroots level. While these developments may appear incremental, they represent critical building blocks for a more structured and sustained intervention in the future.

One of the most significant emerging dimensions is that the initiative has moved beyond a purely activity-driven approach and has started fostering a receptive environment within communities. Indigenous knowledge, which was often overlooked or taken for granted, is now being re-recognized and re-valued by community members themselves. This shift in perception is crucial, as it lays the foundation for a more organic and community-owned process of knowledge preservation and transmission. In this context, the initiative holds the potential to evolve from a time-bound project into a long-term movement centered on cultural continuity and community stewardship.

Looking ahead, there is substantial scope to institutionalize and strengthen the processes that have been initiated. The documentation of indigenous knowledge, which is currently at a nascent stage, can be developed into a more systematic and decentralized effort through the creation of community-level knowledge repositories. Such repositories - whether in physical or digital formats - can serve as living archives that are accessible to the community and continuously enriched over time. Alongside this, structured platforms for intergenerational learning can be further developed to facilitate sustained interaction between elders, youth, and traditional practitioners, thereby reinforcing the natural flow of knowledge across generations. The increasing visibility and participation of traditional healers, storytellers, artisans, and other cultural practitioners also open up new possibilities.

Altogether, the current state of progress and the emerging field realities provide a strong basis for the project holder to reimagine the initiative with enhanced strategic depth-integrating elements of capacity building, knowledge validation, cultural enterprise, and policy linkage - so that the effort evolves into a sustainable, scalable, and replicable model for safeguarding indigenous knowledge systems and strengthening community identity.

There is potential to organize knowledge holders into networks or forums that not only validate their contributions but also provide them with opportunities to share their practices more widely in ethically appropriate and culturally sensitive ways. Such platforms can help bridge the gap between traditional knowledge systems & broader developmental or research-oriented engagements. Another important opportunity lies in the evolving role of Samaj Prabodhaks themselves. As some of them gain confidence, experience, and community acceptance, there is clear potential to develop a second line of trained community-based facilitators. These individuals can function as local researchers, documenters, and cultural mobilizers, thereby ensuring both continuity and scalability of the initiative. This layered approach to capacity building can significantly strengthen the long-term sustainability of the model.

At the same time, challenges encountered during implementation - such as variations in participant retention, gaps in documentation quality, and logistical constraints - offer important lessons for the future. These experiences underline the need for more flexible, context-responsive approaches that accommodate diverse realities of community settings. Strengthening mentorship support, simplifying documentation processes, and ensuring adequate resource backing will be essential to enhance effectiveness in the subsequent phases. In essence, the present stage of Samaj Prabodhak initiative should be viewed as a formative phase that has successfully established intent, credibility, and initial momentum. The pathway ahead lies in deepening these gains, expanding the scope of engagement, and gradually shaping initiative into a sustainable, community-led framework for preserving and revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Chapter 12: EXPERIENCES OF SAMAJ PRABODHAKS

➤ Experiences viewed

Mr. Prabhakar Juang (51), from Binida village in Ghatgaon Block of Keonjhar district, serves as a Samaj Prabodhak representing the Juang tribal community under VK AICYAM, Bhubaneswar. With over 20 years of experience in social service, he has been actively engaged in community welfare among Juang population spread across four blocks of Keonjhar district.

In May 2025, he participated in a 10-day residential training at VK AICYAM, where 12 tribal representatives were trained on indigenous culture, traditions, rituals, lifestyle, agriculture, food systems, and traditional healing practices. The training also emphasized documentation skills and community engagement. Weekly online review meetings were conducted to ensure continuous learning and coordination. This was followed by a field internship phase (May–June 2025), where participants worked at the village level, interacting with community members and collecting information. A second training phase (June–July 2025) focused on sharing field experiences, improving documentation techniques and planning community-based programs. Further trainings and exposure events included:

- A documentation training (September 2025)
- A large youth convention with around 500 participants from across Odisha, focusing on leadership and nation-building
- A Traditional Healers' Conference (November 2025) highlighting indigenous medicinal practices
- Foundation Day celebrations (January 2026) featuring workshops on tribal culture, performances, and participation of knowledge holders from across the state

Through these engagements, the Samaj Prabodhak contributed to documenting traditional knowledge, interacting with elders and healers, and promoting awareness about preserving indigenous practices. He expresses deep appreciation for VK AICYAM's efforts in preserving tribal culture, traditions, and knowledge systems. Despite challenges such as the ill health of the Secretary affecting program pace, he remains committed to safeguarding the fading traditions of his community and is hopeful that the initiative will bring positive transformation.

Overall Insight:

The experience reflects a journey of learning, community engagement, and growing commitment toward the preservation and revitalization of indigenous knowledge systems through grassroots leadership.

Mr. Krishna Chandra Naik (51), from Sarupat village in Ghatgaon Block of Keonjhar district, serves as a Samaj Prabodhak (community motivator and cultural protector) for the Bathudi tribal community under VK AICYAM, Bhubaneswar. His engagement began after interaction with the Secretary, which inspired him to take up the responsibility of preserving and revitalizing the fading traditions, customs, and cultural practices of his community. He participated in a 10-day residential training (May 2025), where he learned about tribal culture, traditions, lifestyle, environmental relationships, and documentation methods.

The training also emphasized discipline, time management, and a value-based lifestyle. Following the training, he undertook a one-month field assignment, interacting with community members to collect information, document traditions, and record cultural practices through writing, photos and videos. Though challenging, this field engagement strengthened his understanding and commitment.

Subsequent training phases (June–August 2025) focused on improving documentation skills, correcting errors, and enhancing the quality of collected information. He also participated in:

- A large youth convention with around 500 participants from across Odisha, where he contributed through service and coordination
- A Traditional Healers' Conference (November 2025), where indigenous medicinal knowledge was shared and appreciated
- Foundation Day celebrations (January 2026), where he facilitated participation of his community members, including performers, storytellers, and traditional practitioners

Through these experiences, he deepened his appreciation for nature, indigenous knowledge, and the role of culture in community identity. He acknowledges the challenges of balancing family responsibilities and community work but remains motivated. With prior experience as a social worker and a ward member for 10 years, he views this initiative as a renewed opportunity to serve society. He expresses strong faith that VK AICYAM has empowered him with courage and direction to safeguard disappearing traditions and strengthen community identity.

Overall Insight:

His journey reflects a transformation from a community volunteer to a committed cultural custodian, dedicated to preserving indigenous heritage through active engagement, documentation, and community mobilization.

Mr. Krishna Chandra Dehuri (27), from Damodargauni village in Keonjhar district, is working as a Samaj Prabodhak under VK AICYAM, Bhubaneswar, representing the Bhuyan tribal community. His work primarily focuses on documenting the community's festivals, rituals, customs, worship practices, and traditional way of life across areas such as Banspal, Telkoi, and Pallahara blocks.

He received training from VK AICYAM, where 12 tribal representatives were oriented on their roles and responsibilities, along with methods of cultural documentation and community engagement. The training was conducted under the guidance of the Secretary, Director, and other trainers, and included regular coordination through online (Google Meet) review sessions for monitoring progress and planning activities.

Following the initial training, he was assigned field responsibilities (May–June 2025) to engage with community members, collect information, and document traditional practices. A second phase of training (June–July 2025) further strengthened his skills and understanding. He expresses satisfaction and motivation from being part of the initiative, viewing it as an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to preserving the cultural heritage of his community.

Overall Insight:

His experience reflects the early-stage development of a young community worker who is gaining skills and confidence in documenting and safeguarding indigenous traditions through structured training and field engagement.

Mr. Satyajit Sanangi, belonging to the Bhuyan tribe from Tangarpada village in Banspal block of Keonjhar district, participated as a Samaj Prabodhak under VK-AICYAM, Bhubaneswar. He underwent a structured training programme at the Vivekananda Academy, Bhubaneswar, from April - May 2025, focusing on *man-making and nation-building*. The training covered key areas such as Indigenous Knowledge Systems, leadership and teamwork, biodiversity, traditional agricultural practices, documentation techniques, community engagement methods (including interviews and focus group discussions), emotional intelligence, oral traditions, baseline surveys, and basic audio-visual documentation skills. Regular computer training sessions also enhanced his technical capabilities.

During fieldwork, he applied the knowledge gained by engaging with community members, elders, and knowledge holders to document tribal traditions. His primary focus was on collecting information related to traditional practices, especially folk stories, folk songs, and indigenous lifestyles. He emphasized cross-verification of information by visiting multiple villages to ensure authenticity.

Through this process, he gained valuable insights into traditional food systems (such as the use of forest produce), indigenous methods of fire-making, and herbal healing practices using roots and medicinal plants. The experience deepened his understanding of his own culture and strengthened his commitment to preserving tribal identity.

He expresses gratitude to VK-AICYAM and the training institution for enabling him to realize that cultural heritage is the true identity of a community. He concludes with a strong sense of responsibility towards protecting and preserving tribal culture, language, and traditions

The narrative clearly demonstrates that the Samaj Prabodhak initiative is not merely a training or documentation exercise, but a **process of nurturing culturally rooted community leaders who can bridge tradition and future continuity.**

➤ Learning experiences through Engagement and Review Processes

While individual experience documents from all Samaj Prabodhaks are still in the process of being compiled, significant insights have emerged from their regular engagement in weekly review meetings, peer interactions, and continuous guidance received from the project leadership.

The weekly review meetings, conducted through virtual platforms, have evolved as an important space for reflection, collective learning, and problem-solving. Samaj Prabodhaks have been able to share their field experiences, discuss challenges, and seek guidance on issues related to community engagement, documentation practices, and interaction with knowledge holders. These interactions have gradually strengthened their confidence, clarity of purpose, and sense of accountability.

Regular communication among Samaj Prabodhaks through group platforms has also fostered a spirit of mutual learning and solidarity. They have been able to exchange ideas, discuss field realities, and motivate each other to remain engaged despite personal and contextual challenges. This peer-based interaction has contributed to the development of a supportive learning environment across geographically dispersed communities.

Periodic interactions with the Project Director, the Director, and the Secretary have further enriched their understanding of project's vision and objectives. The leadership has provided not only technical guidance but also moral encouragement, that help the Samaj Prabodhaks to perceive their role as meaningful contributors to community development and cultural preservation.

In addition, exposure to visiting dignitaries and resource persons from Kanyakumari office has broadened their perspective, connecting their local efforts with a larger national vision of cultural revitalization and also community empowerment.

These interactions have helped them appreciate wider relevance of their work beyond their immediate community context

These continuous engagement processes have played a crucial role in shaping the learning journey of Samaj Prabodhaks, enabling them to gradually transition from trainees to the emerging community facilitators and cultural documenters.

The inclusion of experience sharing by Samaj Prabodhaks is essential to capture evolving nature of the project, as it reflects the learning processes, field realities and personal transformations that cannot be fully represented through quantitative outputs alone. In fact, these narratives do provide authenticity, demonstrate effectiveness of mentoring and engagement mechanisms and contextualize both achievements and limitations within a dynamic community-based framework.

The experiences of Samaj Prabodhaks - reflect a journey that is both transformative and deeply rooted in community realities. While the path has involved challenges, learning curves, and evolving capacities, it has also revealed the resilience, commitment, and cultural sensitivity of these grassroots actors. Their growing engagement with elders, knowledge holders, and youth has not only strengthened community connections but

Most of the Samaj Prabodhaks demonstrate strong oral communication skills and possess a natural ability to engage with community members, elders, and knowledge holders. Their fluency in local languages, familiarity with cultural contexts, and ease of interaction have enabled them to effectively mobilize communities and facilitate meaningful dialogue around traditional practices & knowledge systems.

Importantly, they enjoy a high degree of acceptance and trust within their respective communities, which has significantly contributed to their ability to access knowledge sources that are often not readily shared with outsiders. This level of community integration represents a critical strength of the initiative.

From a programmatic perspective, this indicates that while written documentation skills need to be further strengthened thru' continued training and mentoring, the foundational qualities required for community-based cultural facilitation such as communication, trust-building, and cultural rootedness are strongly present among Samaj Prabodhaks.

Thus, the current scenario reflects not a limitation, but an evolving capacity-building process, where oral proficiency and community acceptance serve as strong pillars upon which further technical and documentation skills can be systematically developed.

“The strength of the Samaj Prabodhaks lies not merely in their ability to write, but in their ability to connect, communicate, and carry living voice of their communities.”

has also initiated a renewed dialogue around the value of indigenous knowledge systems. These experiences underline that the process of nurturing community-based cultural leadership is gradual and experiential in nature that can contribute to sustainable and community-driven movement for the preservation and revitalization of indigenous knowledge systems.

➤ Understanding and Applying the Learning

One of the most significant insights emerging from the implementation of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative relates to the learning journey of the participating youth. The project began with the selection of 20 young individuals from ten Janajati communities, with expectation that they would gradually evolve into community facilitators capable of documenting indigenous knowledge systems and mobilizing community participation.

While the enthusiasm of the participants was evident from the beginning, the process of transforming them into confident community knowledge facilitators revealed a natural learning curve that required time, patience, and sustained mentoring. For many of Samaj Prabodhaks, the initiative represented their first structured exposure to activities such as community documentation, reflective observation, and interaction with traditional knowledge holders in a systematic manner.

Although they possessed an intuitive understanding of their cultural environment, translating this familiarity into organized documentation and analytical reflection was a new experience. Developing these skills required gradual exposure to field practices, repeated interactions with mentors, and confidence-building exercises.

Another dimension of the learning curve was related to communication and articulation. Indigenous knowledge systems are often transmitted through oral traditions, storytelling, and lived practices rather than formal documentation. Encouraging the Samaj Prabodhaks to record these traditions in written or digital formats demanded not only technical guidance but also the development of self-confidence in expressing their observations. This process inevitably took longer than originally anticipated.

Socio-economic context of participants also influenced their engagement with programme. Most of Samaj Prabodhaks come from rural and tribal households where responsibilities for the livelihood and family commitments form an integral part of everyday life.

This experience has provided an important institutional learning for the organization. It has become evident that initiatives aimed at nurturing community-based cultural leadership must be viewed as long-term processes of capacity building rather than short-term training exercises. Developing youth as facilitators of indigenous knowledge documentation requires sustained mentoring, practical exposure and continuous encouragement

Balancing these responsibilities with demands of field engagement, documentation, and training required considerable adjustment on their part. In several instances, family circumstances, livelihood pressures, and migration-related issues affected the continuity of participation for some of selected youth. At the same time, the initiative revealed an encouraging development. A smaller core group of Samaj Prabodhaks gradually emerged who demonstrated the sustained interest, commitment and adaptability in engaging with project objectives.

These individuals showed a deeper inclination towards the learning from community elders, documenting cultural practices and facilitating dialogue within their communities. Their continued engagement highlights the importance of nurturing a committed core group rather than focusing solely on numerical participation.

The learning curve observed during this phase has therefore been a valuable part of the project's evolution. It has helped the organization better understand the challenges faced by first-generation community researchers and has highlighted the importance of patient guidance and the flexible engagement strategies.

Ultimately, emergence of a dedicated group of Samaj Prabodhaks who continue to remain engaged with the initiative represents a promising foundation for strengthening the model in the future. With continued mentoring and institutional support, these youth have potential to grow into effective community leaders capable of contributing meaningfully to preservation and revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

➤ **Maturity Journey – From Participation to Commitments**

An important development that emerged during the course of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative has been the gradual transition from **broad participation to the emergence of a smaller but more committed group of youth leaders**. While the project initially began with the selection and orientation of twenty Samaj Prabodhaks representing ten Janajati communities, the realities of field engagement, livelihood pressures, and personal circumstances meant that not all participants were able to sustain the same level of involvement throughout the implementation period.

Such a development is not uncommon in community-based initiatives that seek to nurture leadership among first-generation youth participants. Engagement in cultural documentation, community facilitation, and knowledge-sharing requires not only interest but also sustained motivation, time commitment, and a supportive family and social environment. For many participants, balancing these expectations with livelihood responsibilities and family obligations proved challenging.

However, the process also revealed a positive and encouraging outcome. Over time, **a smaller group of Samaj Prabodhaks demonstrated a deeper level of commitment and continued engagement with the initiative**. These individuals showed sustained interest in interacting with elders and traditional knowledge holders, documenting indigenous practices, and participating actively in discussions related to community traditions and cultural heritage.

The emergence of this committed core group has provided an important insight into the nature of grassroots leadership development. Leadership within community contexts often evolves through **gradual processes of self-selection**, where individuals who feel a stronger sense of connection with initiative continue to remain engaged despite the challenges.

Their persistence reflects not only personal motivation but also a growing sense of responsibility towards their communities and cultural heritage.

For the organization implementing the initiative, this experience has reinforced the understanding that **community leadership development is best nurtured through a process that allows individuals to discover their own commitment over time**. While broad participation is essential during the initial phases, the formation of a dedicated core group often becomes the foundation for sustaining the initiative in the long run.

In this sense, the transition from wider participation to the emergence of a committed nucleus should not be viewed as a limitation but rather as **a natural stage in the maturation of the Samaj Prabodhak model**. The presence of these dedicated youth provides a strong foundation upon which future initiatives for community leadership and indigenous knowledge preservation can be built.

Few more Samaj Prabodhaks may join shortly BUT OBVIOUSLY

These emerging Team of Samaj Prabodhaks now represents a valuable resource for future efforts

AIMED AT protecting and revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems. With continued mentoring, exposure, and institutional support, they have the potential to evolve into effective community facilitators who can inspire other youth, engage with knowledge holders, and contribute to ongoing process of documenting, promoting traditional practices.

Chapter 13: CHALLENGES, CONSTRAINTS, AND LESSONS LEARNT

➤ CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

The implementation of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative brought forward a range of challenges and constraints that are intrinsic to community-based, culturally rooted interventions. These challenges, while affecting the pace and scale of planned activities, also provided critical insights into realities of working with indigenous communities and the dynamics of nurturing grassroots cultural leadership. Rather than being viewed merely as limitations, these experiences have contributed to a deeper institutional understanding of how such initiatives must be designed, paced, and supported over time.

1. Dropout and Reduced Continuity of Samaj Prabodhaks

One of the most significant challenges encountered during implementation was the **dropout and reduced continuity of Samaj Prabodhaks**. While the project initially envisioned active engagement of twenty Prabodhaks representing different Janajati communities, only a smaller group could remain consistently involved throughout the implementation period. This situation was influenced by multiple interrelated factors:

✓ **Economic Pressures**

Most Samaj Prabodhaks belong to economically vulnerable households where daily livelihood takes precedence over voluntary or semi-voluntary engagements. The absence of sustained financial incentives made it difficult for many participants to balance project responsibilities with income-generating activities.

✓ **Livelihood Compulsions**

Seasonal and distress migration is a common reality in many tribal regions. Several community members – individually with or without their family members had to migrate in search of employment, which directly affected their availability in their respective villages and continuity of stay in their home/villages. Moreover, those who stayed in their home/villages also had to spare time for livelihood purposes - esp. in agriculture, NTFP [Non-Timber Forest Produces] like Mahua, Sal Leaf which are directly contributing their household income – over a year – almost every year. Samaj Prabodhaks, their family members and community members are dependent upon these sources of livelihood for their survival. Sparing time for these purposes is compulsive factor that reduced time for remaining available for assigned work as per project plan.

✓ **Lack of Sustained Incentives**

While the initiative provided orientation and engagement opportunities, the absence of structured and sustained incentive mechanisms financial or non-financial limited long-term commitment, particularly for youth who are navigating livelihood uncertainties.

✓ **Family Responsibilities**

Many participants had significant family responsibilities, including supporting household work, caregiving, and agricultural activities. These responsibilities often took priority over project-related tasks, especially during peak seasons.

✓ **Limited Institutional Support at Field Level**

Given the geographical spread and limited field-level facilitation capacity, continuous handholding and follow-up with each Samaj Prabodhak could not be ensured. This affected motivation and consistency among some participants. This experience highlights that **community-based youth engagement cannot rely solely on initial training and orientation**. Sustained participation requires a combination of mentoring, recognition, and context-sensitive support systems that align with socio-economic realities of the participants.

2. Operational Challenges

The operational environment of the project presented several constraints that influenced implementation efficiency and outreach.

Geographical Difficulties

The project areas are characterized by **remote locations, difficult terrain, and limited transportation facilities**. Travel between villages often requires considerable time and effort, making it challenging to organize regular meetings, workshops, and coordinated activities.

Limited Resources

The scale of planned interventions including inter-community workshops, cultural festivals, and training programmes required resources that were beyond the available capacity. As a result, some activities had to be scaled down, postponed, or integrated with existing community events.

Communication Gaps

Limited access to reliable communication infrastructure, including mobile connectivity in certain areas, affected regular coordination between the project team and Samaj Prabodhaks. This also impacted timely reporting, follow-up, and planning of activities.

Reflective Insight - These operational challenges underline importance of **decentralized planning and flexible implementation models**, where activities are adapted to local conditions rather than relying on centralized scheduling.

3. Cultural and Social Challenges

Working within the domain of indigenous knowledge systems involves engaging with deeply embedded cultural norms, practices, and perceptions. This brings its own set of challenges.

✓ Declining Interest Among Younger Generations

A gradual shift in aspirations and exposure to external influences has led to **reduced interest among some youth in traditional practices and cultural knowledge**. Many young individuals perceive such knowledge as less relevant to contemporary livelihood opportunities.

✓ Fragmentation of Traditional Institutions

Traditional community institutions that once played a central role in knowledge transmission—such as councils of elders or customary governance systems are experiencing varying degrees of weakening. This fragmentation affects the continuity and collective ownership of cultural practices.

✓ Sensitivity Around Knowledge Sharing

Certain forms of indigenous knowledge, particularly related to healing practices, rituals, and spiritual traditions, are shared selectively within communities. Knowledge holders may be cautious about documentation due to concerns regarding misuse or misinterpretation.

Reflective Insight - These challenges highlight that **cultural revitalization cannot be approached as a purely technical or documentation-driven exercise**. It requires sensitive facilitation, trust-building, and creating spaces where communities feel respected and secure in sharing their knowledge.

4. Challenges in Documentation and Articulation

A key component of the initiative involved documenting cultural practices and indigenous knowledge systems. However, this process posed several challenges.

- Many Samaj Prabodhaks were engaging in structured documentation for the first time.
- Translating oral traditions and experiential knowledge into written formats required new skills.
- There was initial hesitation and lack of confidence in preparing structured reports.

As a result, number of completed documents remained lower than anticipated. However, those who continued the process demonstrated **gradual improvement in articulation, observation, and analytical ability**.

Reflective Insight - This experience reinforces that **documentation is a learning journey**, requiring iterative practice, feedback, and encouragement rather than one-time training.

5. Balancing Project Design with Community Realities

Another underlying challenge was aligning the **planned project framework with the lived realities of the communities**. While the project design included structured activities such as workshops, conferences, and training programmes, the actual engagement often depended on:

- availability of community members
- local events and seasonal cycles
- cultural appropriateness of interventions

This required continuous adaptation and sometimes re-prioritization of activities.

Reflective Insight - The experience suggests that **community-based initiatives must be designed with built-in flexibility**, allowing space for local adaptation and organic processes of engagement.

6. Institutional Learning and Way Forward

The challenges and constraints encountered during the implementation of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative have provided important institutional learning for the organization.

It has become evident that initiatives aimed at nurturing **community-based cultural leadership** must be viewed as **long-term processes of capacity building rather than short-term training exercises**. Developing youth as facilitators of indigenous knowledge documentation requires:

- sustained mentoring and handholding
- continuous engagement with communities
- practical exposure and experiential learning
- mechanisms for motivation, recognition, and support

The experience also emphasizes the need to:

- strengthen decentralized facilitation systems
- integrate livelihood-sensitive approaches
- build trust-based relationships with knowledge holders
- create enabling platforms for intergenerational knowledge exchange

Concluding Perspective

While the challenges encountered during the project influenced its pace and scale, they have significantly enriched understanding of what it takes to work effectively within community-driven cultural contexts.

These constraints not only highlighted areas requiring improvement but also reaffirmed importance of **patience, adaptability, sustained engagement** in achieving meaningful outcomes.

In essence, journey of Samaj Prabodhak initiative demonstrates that **the process of learning, adjusting, and evolving is itself a critical achievement**, laying the groundwork for stronger, more resilient, and context-responsive interventions in the future.

➤ Lessons Learnt

Emerging Lessons and Institutional Reflections

This section makes the report **forward-looking**.

Key lessons could include:

- Community-based programmes require **continuous mentoring**
- Cultural initiatives need **economic sustainability for youth**
- Women's role in storytelling and cultural preservation is crucial
- Documentation must be combined with **community participation**

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative has been both a field intervention and a learning journey for the organization. While the project sought to nurture community youth as facilitators of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, process of implementation generated valuable insights into the realities of community engagement, youth leadership development, and cultural documentation. These experiences have contributed to a deeper institutional understanding of how initiatives aimed at protecting indigenous knowledge must be designed and implemented in ways that respect community rhythms, social contexts, and lived realities of tribal youth. The following lessons and reflections have emerged from implementation of the initiative.

1. Community-Based Knowledge Preservation Requires Time and Trust

One of the most important lessons of the program is that efforts to document and revitalize indigenous knowledge systems cannot be rushed through short-term project timelines. Traditional knowledge is deeply embedded within social relationships, cultural practices & community trust networks. Many knowledge holders prefer to share their experiences gradually, particularly when dealing with cultural beliefs, ritual traditions, or healing practices. Building trust & creating an environment where elders feel comfortable sharing their knowledge requires sustained engagement and respectful dialogue. This experience highlights importance of viewing indigenous knowledge documentation as a long-term community process rather than a one-time documentation exercise.

2. Youth Leadership Development is a Gradual Process

The initiative demonstrated that nurturing community youth as facilitators of cultural learning is a gradual and evolving process. While the participating Samaj Prabodhaks showed enthusiasm and interest,

developing the confidence to interact with elders, document cultural practices, and facilitate community discussions required sustained mentoring and practical exposure. The experience reaffirmed that youth leadership development in community contexts cannot be achieved through training alone. It requires continuous guidance, experiential learning, and opportunities for reflection and dialogue.

3. Indigenous Knowledge Exists within Everyday Community Life

Another important insight emerging from the project is that indigenous knowledge is not confined to formal rituals or cultural ceremonies. Rather, it is deeply embedded in the everyday practices of community life. Traditional knowledge related to agriculture, food preparation, healing practices, ecological understanding, and social relationships is often expressed through routine activities and informal interactions. Recognizing these everyday contexts is essential for meaningful documentation and preservation efforts. This realization encourages a broader understanding of Indigenous Knowledge Systems as living knowledge traditions rather than static cultural artifacts.

4. Women's Knowledge Plays a Crucial but Often Under-recognized Role

During community interactions, it became increasingly evident that women possess extensive knowledge related to household health practices, traditional food systems, child care, and cultural rituals associated with family and community life. However, much of this knowledge remains undocumented and is often overlooked in formal discussions of cultural traditions. The experience of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative highlights the need to create dedicated spaces where women's knowledge can be recognized, documented, and shared across generations. Future initiatives will therefore place greater emphasis on engaging women as important custodians of indigenous knowledge traditions.

5. Community Cultural Pride is an Important Foundation for Knowledge Preservation

The project experience also demonstrated that when communities begin to recognize the value of their own traditions and knowledge systems, it generates a renewed sense of cultural pride and identity. Such recognition can encourage both elders and youth to actively participate in the preservation of their cultural heritage. This insight suggests that initiatives aimed at documenting indigenous knowledge should not focus solely on collecting information but should also foster community pride and collective ownership of cultural traditions.

6. The Samaj Prabodhak Model Shows Promising Potential

The concept of nurturing community youth as "Samaj Prabodhaks" has shown encouraging potential as a model for promoting community-based cultural engagement. Even within the limited period of implementation, the initiative demonstrated that youth can serve as effective bridges between elders and younger generations. With sustained mentoring and institutional support, such youth leaders can play a meaningful role in facilitating community dialogues, documenting knowledge practices, and encouraging cultural continuity. The experience suggests that the Samaj Prabodhak model could be further strengthened and expanded as a community-centered approach for safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

7. Importance of Flexible and Adaptive Project Approaches

The implementation experience also highlighted the need for flexibility in project planning and implementation. Community initiatives often evolve in response to social dynamics, seasonal cycles, and cultural contexts that may not always align with predefined timelines. Adopting an adaptive approach that allows room for learning and adjustment can enhance the effectiveness of such initiatives. This experience has encouraged the organization to view project implementation not merely as the execution of planned activities but as a process of continuous learning and adaptation.

Concluding Reflection

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative has therefore served as an important platform for learning about the processes involved in nurturing community youth leadership and revitalizing indigenous knowledge traditions. While the journey of documentation and cultural preservation continues, the experiences gained during this phase have strengthened the organization's understanding of community dynamics, youth engagement, and knowledge stewardship. These lessons will guide future efforts aimed at strengthening community-based approaches for protecting Indigenous Knowledge Systems and ensuring that the wisdom embedded within tribal traditions continues to inspire and guide future generations.

Chapter 14: WAY FORWARD

➤ Strengthening Samaj Prabodhak Model

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative, in its present phase, has laid a meaningful foundation for engaging community youth, reviving cultural dialogue, and initiating the documentation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems among the Janajati communities of Odisha. The experiences, achievements, and challenges emerging from this phase collectively point towards the need for a **more structured, sustained, and visionary approach** in the future. The way forward, therefore, lies not merely in expanding activities, but in **strengthening Samaj Prabodhak Model as a community-driven, institutionally supported and knowledge-centric framework**. The following strategic directions are envisioned as complementary and interlinked pathways for deepening impact and ensuring long-term sustainability.

1. Strengthening Training and Capacity Building Systems

A key priority for the future will be to **institutionalize and deepen the training architecture** for Samaj Prabodhaks. The initial phase has demonstrated that while orientation creates awareness, sustained effectiveness requires **continuous learning, practice, and mentoring**.

Future training modules will focus on:

- **Cultural Documentation Skills**
Enabling Prabodhaks to systematically record traditions, practices, and narratives with clarity, accuracy, and contextual sensitivity.
- **Community Mobilization Techniques**
Building their capacity to engage with diverse community stakeholders, facilitate dialogue, and encourage participation across age groups and social segments.
- **Oral Tradition Recording and Interpretation**
Training in capturing oral histories, folk narratives, songs, and rituals in ways that preserve both content and cultural context.

These training efforts will be designed as **iterative and field-linked processes**, combining classroom orientation with practical exposure, peer learning, and continuous feedback.

2. Introducing Context-Sensitive Incentive Mechanisms

The experience of limited continuity among Samaj Prabodhaks highlights the importance of creating **supportive and motivating ecosystems** for sustained engagement.

Future strategies will explore a balanced mix of:

- **More Honorarium-based Support** to partially address livelihood constraints
- **Recognition Platforms** such as community honours, certificates, and public acknowledgment of contributions
- **Skill Development Opportunities** that enhance the long-term personal and professional growth of Prabodhaks

These mechanisms will not only strengthen participation but also help position the role of Samaj Prabodhaks as **socially valued and aspirational within the community context**.

3. Expanding the Role of Samaj Prabodhaks

Building on their evolving capacities, the role of Samaj Prabodhaks can be significantly expanded beyond initial expectations. In the future, they can function as:

- **Community Knowledge Documenters**
Systematically capturing and preserving indigenous knowledge across thematic areas such as health, agriculture, rituals, and governance.
- **Cultural Educators**
Facilitating learning spaces for youth & children thru' storytelling, cultural sessions, and community dialogues.
- **Facilitators of Oral Traditions**
Reviving and promoting Lok Katha, Lok Geet, and other forms of oral expression through regular community-based platforms. This expanded role will gradually transform Samaj Prabodhaks into **community-based cultural facilitators and knowledge intermediaries**, strengthening local ownership of the initiative.

4. Deepening Documentation and Creating Knowledge Repositories

The documentation efforts initiated during the current phase have revealed the vast richness of indigenous knowledge systems. The next phase will aim to **systematize and scale this process** through:

- Development of **community knowledge archives**
- Thematic documentation on life-cycle practices, annual cycles, and traditional governance systems
- Structured recording of oral traditions, healing practices, and ecological knowledge

Over time, these efforts can lead to the creation of **decentralized, community-owned knowledge repositories**, ensuring that knowledge remains accessible and preserved within the community itself.

5. Promoting Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission

A critical dimension of sustainability lies in ensuring that knowledge flows effectively between generations. Future interventions will prioritize:

- **Storytelling sessions and cultural learning circles**
- **Youth–elder interaction platforms**
- **Community festivals as knowledge-sharing spaces**

These platforms will help bridge generational gaps and ensure that indigenous knowledge is not only preserved but also **internalized and practiced by younger generations**.

6. Recognizing and Honouring Knowledge Holders

The initiative has identified a wide range of knowledge holders including healers, elders, ritual practitioners, and storytellers. Future strategies will emphasize:

- **Formal and informal recognition within community forums**
- Creating opportunities for knowledge holders to share their experiences in wider platforms
- Documenting and celebrating their contributions as part of community heritage

Such recognition will reinforce their role as **custodians of knowledge** and encourage wider community respect and participation.

7. Expanding Community Engagement and Youth Participation

The next phase will aim to broaden the base of participation by:

- Engaging a larger number of youth across communities
- Encouraging women's participation, particularly in areas of oral traditions and household knowledge systems
- Strengthening linkages with community-based organizations such as Janajati Sanghs and Maha Sanghas

This approach will ensure that initiative evolves from a **limited cadre-based model to a wider community movement**.

8. Strengthening Institutional Support and Partnerships

For long-term sustainability and scaling, the Samaj Prabodhak Model will benefit from stronger institutional linkages. Future efforts will focus on:

- **Partnerships with research and academic institutions** for validation and documentation support
- **Collaboration with cultural organizations** for organizing workshops, festivals, and exhibitions
- Development of **documentation and dissemination platforms** (print, digital, and community-based)

Such partnerships will enhance both the **credibility and reach** of the initiative.

9. Integrating Indigenous Knowledge with Development Perspectives

The initiative has reaffirmed that indigenous knowledge systems hold valuable insights into **sustainable living, health practices, ecological balance, and community resilience**.

Future pathways will explore:

- Linking traditional knowledge with **sustainable livelihood opportunities**
- Integrating ecological wisdom into **climate resilience and natural resource management initiatives**
- Promoting traditional health practices in alignment with **community well-being frameworks**

This will help position indigenous knowledge not only as cultural heritage but also as a **relevant resource for contemporary development challenges**.

Concluding Vision

The future of the Samaj Prabodhak initiative lies in its evolution from a project into a **sustained, community-owned movement for safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge Systems**. The current phase has demonstrated that even modest efforts can initiate meaningful processes of cultural reflection, dialogue, and revitalization. With strengthened training systems, supportive incentive structures, expanded roles for Samaj Prabodhaks, and deeper institutional partnerships, the model holds the potential to become a **replicable framework for community-led knowledge preservation**.

At its core, the vision is to nurture a generation of community-based facilitators who are not only documenters of tradition but also **carriers of cultural continuity, enablers of intergenerational learning, and advocates of indigenous wisdom**.

Such a model, rooted in community realities and strengthened through institutional support, can contribute significantly to ensuring that the rich and diverse knowledge traditions of Janajati communities continue to thrive with dignity, relevance, and resilience in the years to come.

➤ Other Key Recommendations

The experience of implementing the Samaj Prabodhak initiative offers a valuable foundation for shaping future strategies. At the same time, the limitations, constraints, and field realities observed during the current phase underline the need for practical, adaptive, and context-sensitive recommendations rather than idealized or resource-intensive prescriptions.

The following recommendations are therefore framed with a clear recognition of:

- the socio-economic realities of Samaj Prabodhaks,
- the operational and institutional constraints, and
- the gradual nature of community-based cultural processes.

These recommendations aim to strengthen initiative ensuring feasibility, sustainability & community ownership.

1. Strengthening Mentorship and Continuous Engagement

Recommendation - Shift from one-time training approaches to a mentorship-driven model involving regular follow-up, field guidance, and peer learning.

Rationale - The current experience clearly indicates that Samaj Prabodhaks require continuous handholding to sustain their engagement and improve their documentation and facilitation skills. Limited continuity was not due to lack of interest alone, but due to insufficient ongoing support.

Feasibility Approach

- Introduce cluster-level mentors (senior Prabodhaks or field coordinators)
- Organize small, periodic review meetings rather than large centralized trainings
- Encourage peer-sharing sessions to build confidence

This approach is feasible as it builds on existing human resources rather than on large additional investments.

2. Ensuring Gradual and Genuine Community Ownership

Recommendation - Transition the initiative from being organization-led to community-anchored, with increasing involvement of elders, local leaders, and community groups.

Rationale - Sustainability of cultural initiatives depends on community ownership rather than external facilitation. The current phase shows that communities are receptive, but ownership is still evolving.

Feasibility Approach

- Involve community elders and knowledge holders in planning local activities
- Encourage village-level cultural groups or informal committees
- Integrate activities with existing community events and festivals

This reduces dependency on external structures and aligns with local social systems.

3. Expanding and Recognizing the Role of Women Storytellers

Recommendation - Actively promote and support women as key carriers of oral traditions, particularly in storytelling, songs, and household knowledge systems.

Rationale - The initiative has revealed that women possess rich cultural knowledge but often lack platforms for expression. Their involvement can significantly strengthen intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Feasibility Approach

- Organize small, community-based storytelling sessions led by women
- Provide recognition at local events rather than formal institutional platforms
- Encourage interactions between women storytellers and young girls

This is highly feasible as it builds on existing cultural practices without requiring heavy resources.

4. Integrating Research with Community Knowledge Systems

Recommendation - Develop selective and ethical linkages with research and academic institutions to strengthen documentation and validation.

Rationale - While community knowledge is rich, structured documentation and wider recognition require technical & academic support. However, this must be done carefully to avoid extraction or misrepresentation.

Feasibility Approach

- Initiate small-scale collaborations (documentation support, exposure visits)
- Focus on co-creation of knowledge rather than external research dominance
- Ensure prior informed consent and community validation

A phased and cautious approach will make this both feasible and ethically sound.

5. Developing a Sustainable Samaj Prabodhak Network

Recommendation - Strengthen the existing group into a functional and flexible network rather than expanding rapidly.

Rationale - The current phase has shown that quality of engagement is more important than numbers. A smaller, committed group can create deeper impact and gradually expand.

Feasibility Approach

- Focus on retaining and strengthening the most active Prabodhaks
- Create opportunities for interaction across communities
- Develop a second-line group gradually through exposure and mentorship

This avoids over-expansion and ensures sustainability.

6. Introducing Modest and Context-Sensitive Incentive Mechanisms

Recommendation - Provide limited but meaningful incentives to support the continued engagement of Samaj Prabodhaks.

Rationale - Economic pressures and livelihood priorities were key reasons for dropout. While full financial support may not be feasible, partial support and recognition can sustain motivation.

Feasibility Approach

- Provide task-based honorarium (for documentation or facilitation)
- Offer certificates, public recognition, and exposure opportunities
- Link participation with skill-building benefits

A modest approach ensures feasibility without creating unsustainable financial commitments.

7. Adopting Flexible and Decentralized Implementation Models

Recommendation - Move towards decentralized and flexible planning, allowing activities to align with community rhythms.

Rationale - Rigid scheduling was not always compatible with:

- migration cycles
- agricultural seasons
- local cultural calendars

Feasibility Approach

- Plan activities around existing gatherings and festivals
- Allow Prabodhaks to choose locally relevant timings and formats
- Reduce dependence on centralized events

This improves participation without increasing cost.

8. Strengthening Documentation through Simplified Tools

Recommendation - Simplify and adapt documentation formats to match the capacity and comfort level of Samaj Prabodhaks.

Rationale - Complex formats can discourage participation, especially for first-time documenters.

Feasibility Approach

- Use simple, guided templates
- Allow oral recording followed by assisted documentation
- Provide continuous feedback instead of one-time evaluation

This ensures gradual improvement without overwhelming participants.

9. Building Realistic and Phased Future Planning

Recommendation - Adopt a phased and incremental approach to future planning rather than aiming for a “full-proof” model immediately.

Rationale - Given the current limitations—such as participant continuity, resource constraints, and socio-cultural dynamics a fully structured and large-scale model may not be immediately feasible.

Strategic Insight - However, these very limitations can contribute positively if understood correctly:

- Smaller scale allows deeper learning and refinement
- Challenges help identify context-specific solutions
- Gradual growth ensures stronger foundations

Feasibility Approach

- Phase 1: Strengthen core group and processes
- Phase 2: Expand participation and documentation
- Phase 3: Institutionalize and scale

This transforms limitations into building blocks for a robust future model.

Concluding Note

The recommendations emerging from the Samaj Prabodhak initiative emphasize that sustainability lies not in scale alone, but in depth, adaptability, and ownership. While the current phase has revealed several constraints, it has equally demonstrated the potential for meaningful transformation when community processes are approached with sensitivity and patience. A future strategy that builds incrementally strengthening people, processes, and partnerships can enable the initiative to evolve into a resilient and community-driven model, capable of preserving and revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a manner that is both practical and enduring.

Chapter 15: CONCLUSION

The experiences of Samaj Prabodhak initiative demonstrate that the protection and revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems require approaches that combine community leadership, youth engagement, intergenerational dialogue, and institutional support. While the journey of documenting and preserving traditional knowledge is a long-term process, initiatives such as this contribute to creating the conditions in which communities can rediscover and celebrate their cultural heritage. By integrating these insights into policy frameworks and development practice, it is possible to promote approaches that respect community wisdom while ensuring that indigenous knowledge traditions continue to guide future generations.

Key insights for policy and practice

The Samaj Prabodhak initiative was conceptualized against the backdrop of increasing concern regarding the gradual erosion of indigenous knowledge traditions due to modernization, migration, and the declining interaction between younger generations and traditional knowledge holders.

Recognizing that communities themselves are the primary custodians of such knowledge systems, the project sought to promote a community-led approach by empowering local youth as Samaj Prabodhaks to facilitate documentation, cultural dialogue, and knowledge transmission. Although the initiative encountered certain operational and contextual challenges, it also generated important insights regarding the processes through which Indigenous Knowledge Systems can be effectively protected and revitalized.

These insights hold relevance not only for the implementing organization but also for policymakers, development practitioners & institutions working in areas of cultural preservation, community development, and indigenous knowledge documentation. The following key insights emerge from the program experience.

1. Community Leadership is Essential for Safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge

The project experience reaffirmed that Indigenous Knowledge Systems cannot be effectively preserved through externally driven documentation efforts alone. Meaningful preservation requires the active participation and leadership of community members who possess the knowledge and cultural context necessary for interpreting and transmitting it.

The engagement of Samaj Prabodhaks demonstrated that community youth can play an important role in mobilizing local participation and encouraging dialogue between elders and younger generations. This highlights the importance of designing policies and programmes that strengthen community leadership and local ownership in knowledge preservation initiatives.

2. Youth Engagement Creates a Bridge between Tradition and the Future

One of the most significant achievements of the project has been the involvement of community youth in cultural documentation and dialogue processes. Through orientation and field engagement, several Samaj Prabodhaks developed a deeper appreciation of their cultural heritage and began interacting with elders to learn about traditional practices. This experience indicates that youth engagement should be recognized as a key strategy in initiatives aimed at protecting Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Policies that support youth-led cultural initiatives, community research programmes, and cultural learning platforms can help ensure the continuity of indigenous knowledge across generations.

3. Indigenous Knowledge Must Be Recognized as Living Knowledge

The documentation exercises carried out during the project revealed that indigenous knowledge is not confined to ritual practices alone but is embedded within everyday aspects of community life, including agriculture, food systems, traditional medicine, ecological management, and social customs. Recognizing indigenous knowledge as living knowledge traditions rather than static cultural artefacts can help shape more holistic policy approaches. Development programmes in areas such as environmental conservation, sustainable agriculture, and community health can benefit significantly from integrating indigenous knowledge practices.

4. Intergenerational Dialogue is Central to Knowledge Transmission

The interactions facilitated by the Samaj Prabodhaks revealed the importance of creating spaces where elders and youth can share experiences and learn from one another. Storytelling sessions, community

discussions, and informal interactions helped revive interest in traditional practices among younger participants. This experience suggests that policy frameworks supporting cultural preservation should encourage community-based platforms for intergenerational learning, such as cultural gatherings, storytelling forums, and local heritage education programmes.

5. Women's Knowledge Needs Greater Recognition and Documentation

During community interactions, it became evident that women possess rich knowledge related to traditional food systems, household health practices, child care traditions, and community rituals. However, much of this knowledge remains under-recognized in formal documentation processes. Future initiatives and policies should therefore emphasize inclusive documentation approaches that recognize the role of women as important custodians of indigenous knowledge within family and community settings.

6. Capacity Building is Crucial for Community-Based Documentation

The experience of working with Samaj Prabodhaks highlighted that community youth often require sustained training and mentoring to develop skills related to documentation, communication, and community facilitation. While the project provided orientation and exposure, the process of developing confidence and competence in these areas takes time. This insight underscores the importance of designing programmes that include structured capacity-building components for community researchers and youth leaders involved in knowledge documentation.

7. Institutional Support and Partnerships Enhance Sustainability

The initiative also revealed the importance of institutional support in sustaining community-based cultural initiatives. Civil society organizations, academic institutions, and cultural bodies can play a constructive role by providing technical guidance, research support, and platforms for disseminating community knowledge. Policies encouraging collaboration between community organizations and knowledge institutions can help strengthen efforts to document and promote Indigenous Knowledge Systems at regional and national levels.

Chapter 16: ANNEXURES

- **PROFILE OF SAMAJ PRABODHAKS**



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Krushna Chandra Naik

At - Sarupat

Po - Jharbeda

Ps – Ghatagaon

Block – Ghatagaon

Dist - Keonjhar

Cast - Bathudi Tribe

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- PHOTOGRAPHS

In the Memory Lane

Training of Samaj Prabodhaks



Prabodhaks during 1st phase training



Prabodhaks in Guest House during Training



Prabodhaks with Master Trainer Sharma Sir



Prabodhaks in a Jolly moment



Certificate distribution to Prabodhaks after completion of training



Samaj Prabodhaks with President, Secretary of VK-AICYAM, Program Director and Others After completion of Training



Laxmi Bhai and Biranchi Bhai addressing a community meeting at Deobandh, Keonjhar



Laxmi Bhai addressing a community meeting in Sankhemundi, Ganjam



Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Naik in a community meeting to discuss on issues related to community culture and tradition



Samaj Prabodhak Uday Naik visited Knowledge holders to discuss on cultural cohesion



Samaj Prabodhak Satyajit Sanangi discussing with Women Story tellers on oral traditions and practices



Samaj Prabodhak Satyajit Sanangi in a community meeting on community cohesion



Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Dehury in a community meeting on Youth and Community Development



Community meeting organized by Krushna Dehury on Youth Empowerment



Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Dehury and Satyajit Sanangi discussing with Knowledge Holder Mr. Daitary Naik - a Padmashree Awardee for social work



Samaj Prabodhak Satyajit Sanangi in a formal discussion with Women Story tellers



**Samaj Prabodhak Prabhakar Juang in discussion with
Community Knowledge Holders on Oral Traditions**



Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Naik organized and addressed a community meeting on promotion and protection of Traditional Culture and practices



Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Dehury participated in a community level coordination meeting on accessing Govt. schemes.



Samaj Prabodhak Udai Naik visiting with local Vaidyas to know how the Traditional Healers trace and collect herbs and shrubs meant for medicine.



Samaj Prabodhak Satyajit with villager elders discussing on rituals and role of community elders



Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Naik discussing with Community Elders on Governance System and Delivery of Justice



Samaj Prabodhak Uday Naik interacting with community youth discussing on Livelihood issues



Samaj Prabodhak Uday Naik participating in Dola Mahotsav organized by Bathudi Maha Sangh



Samaj Prabodhak Uday Naik discussing Women Story Tellers at Gunduriposhi village



Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Naik participated as Organizer of Kalakar Maha Sangh, Keonjhar in Annual Programme arranged at Ghatagaon



Dignitaries inaugurating Annual Souvenir Kalakar Maha Sangh, Keonjhar at Ghatagaon



Samaj Prabodhaks attending Youth Festival organized in the premises of SOA University, Bhubaneswar



Samaj Prabodhaks selling books in the SOA campus during Youth Festival



Samaj Prabodhak Uday sharing his moments with Mr. Maheswar Naik, Secretary Bathudi Sanskrutik Samaj, Cuttack Branch. to discuss on Protection and Promotion of Bathudi Culture



Samaj Prabodhak Prabhakar with Community elders at village Masinajodi, Ghatagaon discussing on Agricultural practices



Samaj Prabodhak Prabhakar discussing with a Community Elder on Justice Governance System in Juang Community at village Barpada, Harichandanpur



Samaj Prabodhak Prabhakar Juang discussing Knowledge holder on Juang Sanskriti at village Nalapanga, Harichandanpur



Samaj Prabodhak Prabhakar and Suresh discussing with community members on Marriage and Ceremonial Practices of Juang Community in village Adakata, Ghatagaon



Samaj Prabodhak Prabhakar and Suresh discussing with community members on Cultural Practices including Marriage and Rituals in Juang Community in village Patabari, Ghatagaon



Samaj Prabodhak Prabhakar and Suresh discussing with community members on Agricultural Practices including Seed Conservation methods in Juang Community at village Phulajhar, Ghatagaon



Samaj Prabodhak Krushna Naik discussing with Village Vaidyas regarding Traditional Healing Well-being practices prevailing in Bathudi community at village Sarupat, Ghatagaon

- **Training details**

TRAINING FRAMEWORK FOR SAMAJ PRABODHAKS

Phase	Type	Duration	Focus
Phase 1	Residential	10 Days	Foundational Knowledge + Soft Skills
Phase 2	Field Internship	30 Days	Community Immersion + Practical Application
Phase 3	Residential	5 Days	Reflection, Documentation and Advanced Skills

Phase 1: Foundational Residential Training (10 Days)

Objective: To equip participants with foundational knowledge on culture, sustainability, communication, and digital literacy.

Day	Topic
Day 1 [16.5.2025]	Orientation + Role of Samaj Prabodhak
Day 2 [17.5.2025]	Basics of Sustainable Development
Day 3 [18.5.2025]	Dharma, Sanskriti & Belief Systems of Janajatis
Day 4 [19.5.2025]	Indigenous Knowledge Systems & Traditional Practices
Day 5 [20.5.2025]	Oral Traditions, Folk Arts, Folktales and Local History
Day 6 [21.5.2025]	Basic Computer Training (Typing, Document Creation)
Day 7 [22.5.2025]	Introduction to English (basic commands, terms)
Day 8 [23.5.2025]	Photography and Video Documentation (Basics)
Day 9 [24.5.2025]	Soft Skills: Communication, Leadership, Event Facilitation
Day 10 [25.5.2025]	Planning for Phase 2: Tools for Community Engagement

Phase 2: Field Internship (30 Days)

Objective: Field immersion to practice documentation, communication & community facilitation skills.

Activities and Themes

Period - 29.5.2025 to 28.6.2025

Week	Focus Area
Week 1	Community Mapping and Rapport Building
Week 2	Knowledge Documentation: Healing, Rituals, Songs, Stories
Week 3	Facilitate Sharing Circles: Mothers, Elders and Youth
Week 4	Skill Demonstration and Youth Engagement

Phase 3: Reflection and Advanced Training (5 Days)

Objective: To consolidate learning, build reporting and dissemination skills, and plan future steps.

Day and Date	Topics
Day 1 – 30.6.2025	Sharing Field Learnings + Peer Review
Day 2 - 1.7.2025	Documentation: Editing, Structuring Reports
Day 3 - 2.7.2025	Designing Community Programmes (Festivals etc.)
Day 4 - 3.7.2025	Digital Skills, Use of social media for Awareness
Day 5 - 4.7.2025	Develop Personal Action Plan as Prabodhak

Logical Linkage of Phases

Phase	Leads To
Phase 1	Builds confidence, foundational knowledge, and technical skills
Phase 2	Allows practice of Phase 1 knowledge in real-life settings
Phase 3	Synthesizes learning, prepares for real-world application and leadership



**Many members of Samaj Prabodhak Phase – I Training
(Both Interns and Faculties)**

**COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR PROTECTION AND
PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS**
AN INTROSPECTIVE REVIEW AND FUTURE PATHWAYS