

Preserving Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Arunachal Pradesh: The Role of Folklore and Cultural Practices

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INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh, located in the Eastern Himalayas, is one of India's most biodiverse regions and a critical part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot. The state is home to 26 major tribes and over 110 sub-tribes, each with distinct languages, customs, and ecological practices. These communities have developed sophisticated Traditional ecological knowledge systems over centuries, encoded in oral traditions, rituals, and customary laws that govern their relationship with nature.

In an era of accelerating climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecological degradation, global recognition is growing that Indigenous knowledge systems offer valuable insights for sustainable resource management and conservation. Yet, in Arunachal Pradesh, as in many parts of the world, these systems face existential threats from modernisation, market forces, and the erosion of intergenerational knowledge transmission (Chaudhuri, 2008).

This paper investigates how folklore and traditional cultural practices in Arunachal Pradesh function as mechanisms of ecological governance. Through detailed case studies of some of the major tribes such as the Adi, Nyishi, Galo, Monpa, Apatani, and Aka tribes, it demonstrates that folk beliefs, whether sacred or secular, encode practical rules for sustainable resource use, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation. The study also examines the challenges these systems face and proposes pathways for integrating indigenous wisdom into contemporary environmental policy and education.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This paper aims to:

- Document how folklore, myths, rituals, and taboos encode ecological knowledge among tribal communities in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Analyse the role of sacred groves and customary institutions in biodiversity conservation.
- Examine case studies from multiple tribes to illustrate the diversity and specificity of ecological knowledge systems.
- Assess the threats posed by modernisation, climate change, and cultural erosion to these knowledge systems.
- And lastly, propose policy recommendations for integrating Indigenous ecological knowledge into conservation and development frameworks.

METHODOLOGY

This research draws on ethnographic studies, participatory rural appraisals, and community workshops conducted with tribal communities across Arunachal Pradesh. Data sources include published academic research, government reports, and field studies. Case studies were selected to represent diverse ecological zones (alpine, temperate and subtropical) and cultural traditions (Animist, Buddhist and Hindu-influenced).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FOLKLORE AS ECOLOGICAL ARCHIVE

Folklore and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Folklore encompassing myths, legends, folktales, songs, proverbs, and ritual narratives functions as a living repository of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Unlike written texts, oral traditions are dynamic, adapting to changing environmental conditions while preserving core ecological principles. They encode observations on seasonal patterns, animal behaviour, plant phenology, weather indicators, and resource management practices accumulated over generations (Singh, 2011; Murtem & Chaudhry, 2014). Scholars distinguish between the cognitive dimension of folklore (knowledge about the environment) and the normative dimension (rules governing human-nature interaction). In Arunachal Pradesh, these dimensions are deeply intertwined: myths explain why certain trees are sacred, taboos prohibit hunting specific animals during breeding seasons, and rituals ensure sustainable harvesting of forest.

Biocultural Diversity

The concept of biocultural diversity recognises the co-evolution of biological and cultural diversity. In Arunachal Pradesh, tribal communities have developed unique bonds with their ecosystems, expressed through language, customs, agricultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. This biocultural diversity is mediated through five distinct climatic zones (alpine, temperate, sub-temperate, tropical, and subtropical), each with corresponding traditional knowledge systems and subsistence strategies (Singh et al., 2011). Biocultural processes vary across ecosystems according to the scale and space of culture and overall species

diversity. For example, the Adi practice jhum (shifting cultivation) adapted to steep slopes, while the Apatani developed sedentary wet-rice cultivation integrated with pisciculture in valley lands. These practices are not merely economic activities but are embedded in cosmologies that regard nature as sacred and interconnected with human well-being.

Ecological Jurisprudence and Customary Law

Among many tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, customary law extends beyond interpersonal relations to include non-human entities such as forests, rivers, mountains, and landscapes. This ecological jurisprudence is enforced through ritual practices, taboos, and ancestral belief systems that limit ecological exploitation (Lex Localis Journal, 2025). For the Nyishi, for example, spirits, sacred groves, and taboos serve as normative agents that regulate land use, shifting cultivation, and forest management. Such systems represent forms of informal environmental governance that predate modern state institutions. They are grounded in kinship ethics, clan obligations, and reciprocal relationships between humans and nature (Murtem & Chaudhry, 2014). Understanding these systems is essential for designing conservation policies that respect Indigenous rights and leverage local knowledge.

CASE STUDIES

The Adi Tribe: Biocultural Diversity and Climate Adaptation

The Adi, one of the largest tribal communities in Arunachal Pradesh, concentrated in East and Upper Siang districts, maintain livelihoods that integrate jhum cultivation, agroforestry and hunting-gathering, supported by an extensive body of Traditional ecological knowledge that informs agricultural cycles, ethno-medicine, forest resource management and ritual practice. Ethnobotanical surveys document the Adi use of over 120 plant species in their pharmacopoeia, notably *Litsea cubeba* for febrile conditions, *Zanthoxylum armatum* for gastrointestinal disorders and *Alpinia nigra* for anti-inflammatory applications. Adi communities also employ biometeorological indicators like cloud types, wind patterns, animal behaviour and plant phenology to anticipate rainfall, drought and temperature variation, using such signals to schedule agricultural operations and cultural activities; for example, the flowering and fruiting of *Gymnocladus burmanicus* (dekang) traditionally signals the appropriate period for hunting during the Solung festival (Singh et al., 2011). Ridin, a sacred creeper used to ward off evil spirits, is believed to have emerged from the placenta of Pedong Nane, the mother of all living beings. During the Abang (ballad), it is narrated: “Keyum Pedonge Rindo Si / Rindo Torgo Em Torge Bomye / Keyum Donie Aji Me / Aji E Einem Dutum Bomye” This ballad reveals that Ridin, originating from Pedong Nane’s placenta, guards and protects mankind from misfortune (Chaudhuri, 2008).

Local knowledge holders report pronounced climatic and ecological change over the past three to four decades. Elder informants recall abundant wild food plants during floods until the 1970s, whereas contemporaneous observations indicate reduced availability of these resources even in relatively undisturbed forest patches. Aquatic biodiversity in forest streams and seasonal water bodies has declined, and broader species diversity in both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems appears reduced, trends attributed to increased siltation and temperature fluctuations. These biotic and phenological shifts have tangible socio-economic and cultural consequences, such as the dekanɡ's altered flowering and fruiting phenology disrupting hunting schedules and festival timing; key wild foods such as wild chestnuts (anke), wild jackfruit seeds (belang), *Arenga obtusifolia* (tasat) and *Cyathea andersonii* (taste) are less available during drought periods; and populations of wild fauna including mithun (*Bos frontalis*), arboreal squirrels (*Ratufa* spp.) and multiple avian species have declined (Singh et al., 2011). Agricultural systems are concurrently stressed, with jhum fallows losing moisture more rapidly or becoming prone to severe erosion under intense precipitation, thereby increasing labour inputs and production costs.

In response to these intersecting ecological and livelihood vulnerabilities, Adi communities have expressed substantial interest in formal conservation measures. Participatory workshops involving 700 participants across 14 villages revealed extensive support for designating segments of virgin community forest as Community Reserve Forests (CRFs) linked to REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) initiatives (Singh et al., 2011). Workshop participants articulated seventeen selection criteria for CRF sites, prioritising a minimum forest area (10–12 hectares), species richness and endemism, low prior degradation, the socio-economic importance of forest products and demonstrable community commitment to conservation. A majority favoured reserving virgin community forest land under CRF status within REDD frameworks conditional on the provision of incentives and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, and both scientists and community members advocated collaborative management arrangements with transparent benefit distribution.

The Nyishi Tribe: Customary Law and Ecological Stewardship

The Nyishi are the largest tribal community in Arunachal Pradesh, inhabiting the five Districts of Arunachal Pradesh. They are characterized by a patrilineal and patrilocal kinship model, with inheritance, marriage customs, and family obligations governed by orally transmitted customary laws. Nyishi customary law incorporates ecological ethics through ritual practices, taboos, and ancestral belief systems (Lex Localis Journal, 2025). These legal-ethical codes extend beyond interpersonal relations to include non-human entities such as forests, rivers, and landscapes. Practices such as widow inheritance, clan exogamy, and patrilineal succession intersect with ecological responsibilities,

particularly in regulating land use, shifting cultivation, and forest management. Their worldview constitutes a form of ecological jurisprudence in which spirits, sacred groves, and taboos serve as normative agents limiting ecological exploitation. For example, certain plants like Tattong, Taapit, and Tan are considered sacred, believed to have sprung from the bones of Kari Bote, a great mythical hunter. These trees are rarely cut unless necessary. They believe that forests are abodes of numerous gods and spirits, both benevolent and malevolent (Chaudhuri, 2008). Huge trees like Rotne are considered homes of evil spirits (Epom/Yapom), and cutting them requires rituals involving pig and fowl sacrifices to appease the displaced spirit (Chaudhuri, 2008). Similarly, cane, bamboo, and leaves for thatching are never cut indiscriminately. Epoeng (big bamboo) is felled only during Ruruk—the dark fourth night after the full moon when it is believed to be free from Takit insects that reduce its longevity. They observe various taboos related to resource use. After childbirth or death funerals, people abstain from cutting plants or visiting areas where bamboo shoots sprout, as it may damage new shoots. These restrictions, rooted in spiritual beliefs, effectively regulate harvesting and protect regenerating vegetation.

Ethnobotanical surveys document over 120 plant species in the Nyishi pharmacopoeia, with selective harvesting and processing techniques that ensure sustainability (Murtem & Chaudhry, 2014). Their knowledge encompasses agricultural cycles, ethno-medicine, forest resource management, and ritualistic traditions that reinforce community cohesion and environmental stewardship.

The Galo Tribe: Wildlife Taboos and Sustainable Hunting

The Galo, another major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, inhabit the West Siang and Siang districts and the other surrounding areas. They are known for their hunting traditions and elaborate taboos governing wildlife interaction (Chaudhuri, 2008). Among them, killing a tiger is taboo. If someone kills a tiger by mistake or due to unavoidable circumstances, not only the individual but the entire village must undergo restrictions and perform rituals. A tiger hunter cannot consume certain types of birds, fish, or meat and must prepare his own food for a month. Moreover, consumption of local onion (Dilap) and ginger (Takee) is tabooed for life. They believe that man, tiger, and elephant originated from the same stock, fostering a sense of kinship with these species. They also refrain from killing certain seasonal birds considered sacred and perceived as agents of new seasons and symbols of good productivity. While hunting is an important aspect of Galo livelihood, there are numerous restrictions related to the consumption of hunted animals. Hunters must undergo taboos, restricting the eating of spices like onion, chilli, and certain leafy vegetables. They cannot touch or use domestic utensils and cannot prepare meat inside the house. These practices, while rooted in spiritual

beliefs, effectively regulate hunting pressure and promote sustainable use of wildlife resources. They also reinforce community accountability, as violations require collective rituals and restrictions.

The Monpa Tribe: Buddhist Sacred Groves in Tawang

The Monpa are a Buddhist tribe inhabiting the Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Unlike many other tribes, they do not sacrifice animals in rituals, instead using animal products and motifs in their oral and performing art traditions (Chaudhuri, 2008). They have a well-developed system of sacred groves, many designated as Gonpa Forest Areas (GFA) affiliated with Buddhist monasteries. These groves are tended by Lamas (monks) and the Monpa community, serving as repositories of biodiversity and spiritual sanctuaries. Arunachal Pradesh has a total of 110 holy groves and 58 GFAs reported from Tawang and West Kameng districts. Tawang alone has 36 GFAs, including Sangdok Palri Gonpa Forest, Dungarmani Gonpa Forest, and Khartang Pharmang Forest (International Journal of Novel Research and Development, 2025).

Sacred groves in Tawang preserve endangered and rare species, offering refuge to uncommon flora and fauna. The customary beliefs and indigenous practices among the Monpa have not only nurtured the traditional knowledge system but also aided in the conservation of indigenous plants in the region. These groves are characterised by dense canopy cover, diverse flora (including medicinal herbs, orchids, and rare endemic plants), and unique fauna. They serve as crucial habitats for birds, insects, and small mammals, contributing significantly to local ecosystem biodiversity. For them, sacred groves are not merely biodiversity hotspots but centres of cultural identity and traditional knowledge (Scribd, 2025). Protection of these groves is intricately linked to religious rituals and community practices that emphasise conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. The belief that these groves are inhabited by deities or spirits has played a crucial role in safeguarding their biodiversity over generations.

The Apatani Tribe: Sedentary Agriculture and Agroforestry

The Apatani inhabit the Ziro or Apatani valley in Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. They practise sedentary wet-rice cultivation integrated with pisciculture and rural forestry. This system, unique among Northeast Indian tribes, has maintained sustainable productivity levels and is highly energy-efficient. The Apatani's cultural landscape, identified by its wet-rice cultivation system combining rice, millet, and fish cultivation in valley land about 1,600 meters above sea level, exemplifies sophisticated resource management. UNESCO has recognised the Apatani/Ziro Valley as a potential World Heritage Site due to its rich traditional ecological knowledge and sustainable practices (Rai, 2005). They practice agroforestry, planting fruit trees, jackfruit, and

other species around kitchen gardens and fields. They grow local ginger, turmeric, brinjal, paddy, *okjok* (*Bauhinia variegata*), finger millet, foxtail millet and cucurbit crops according to different slopes and soil depths (Singh et al., 2011). Beans and cover crops are planted on the highest slopes to prevent soil erosion and conserve moisture during rainfall shortages. Their sedentary agriculture minimises the ecological impact of shifting cultivation, reducing deforestation and soil erosion. Their integrated rice-fish system enhances biodiversity, providing both food security and ecological resilience.

These people of Arunachal Pradesh practice sophisticated sustainable agriculture centred on integrated water management, soil conservation, and crop diversity. They harvest mountain water through bamboo channels and wooden sluice gates, distributing it across terraced rice fields with precision. Living fences of banana, bamboo, and *okjok* trees protect bunds from erosion while providing resources. Their farming system features remarkable varietal diversity in rice, millet, and vegetables across micro-environments, combined with integrated rice-fish cultivation that enhances nutrition and resilience. Sacred groves protect water sources, while community governance ensures equitable water sharing and maintenance. This holistic approach has sustained the Apatani for generations, demonstrating indigenous ecological wisdom that buffers against climate variability and ensures food security through traditional knowledge and cooperative resource management.

The Aka Tribe: Sacred Mountains and Water Bodies

The Aka inhabit the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. They have a concept called , referring to forest lands and water resources (ponds/lakes) considered sacred. The highest mountain peak in the Aka-inhabited area, *Wojo Phu*, is considered a sacred mountain. Extraction of any resources from this mountain and hunting are strictly prohibited. The Aka believe that breaking this taboo will lead to bleeding from the nose and mouth, ultimately causing death. As a result, even today, this mountain retains a huge dense forest cover (Chaudhuri, 2008). They also have the concept of a sacred pond (*Wojo Phu*) located near Nechiphu pass, about 5,000 feet above sea level. People worship this pond, and plucking even leaves from plants surrounding it is taboo. They believe that if someone plucks leaves from this pond, they will lose direction on the way back home, reaching the same place repeatedly. These beliefs and taboos have effectively protected sacred mountains, forests, and water bodies from exploitation. The *Wojo Phu* Mountain and *Nearma Husu* pond remain relatively undisturbed, preserving biodiversity and ecological integrity.

MECHANISMS OF ECOLOGICAL GOVERNANCE

Indigenous communities in the eastern Himalayas deploy culturally embedded mechanisms that align social norms, ritual practice, and institutional authority with

ecological sustainability. These mechanisms operate through narrative, ritual prohibition, spatial sanctity, and customary governance, collectively constituting an informal but effective system of ecological governance.

Myths and Legends as Ecological Instruction

Myths and legends encode ecological norms and moral instruction, translating environmental ethics into memorable, culturally resonant narratives. Among the Adi, certain trees are believed to have sprung from the bones of mythical ancestors, rendering them sacred and off-limits for cutting. Similarly, the Nyishi ballad of Ridin, the sacred creeper, teaches that nature protects humankind when respected, thereby reinforcing reciprocity between humans and the nonhuman world. Such narratives serve didactic, normative, and identity-forming functions. They impart lessons on social conduct and resource use, establish rules and taboos regulating human–nature interaction, reinforce cultural identity and place attachment.

Rituals and Taboos as Regulatory Mechanisms

Rituals and taboos function as informal regulatory mechanisms that limit resource exploitation through spiritually sanctioned prohibitions. Harvesting restrictions, such as cutting bamboo only during specific lunar phases to avoid insect infestation, embed ecological timing within ritual calendars (Chaudhuri, 2008). Hunting taboos protect certain animals such as tigers, gibbons, and seasonal birds through spiritual prohibitions, while post-event restrictions following childbirth or death prohibit cutting plants or visiting bamboo shoot areas. Although rooted in spiritual belief, these practices effectively promote sustainability and biodiversity conservation by reducing overharvesting and safeguarding vulnerable species and life stages (Kuey Journal, 2024).

Sacred Groves as Biodiversity Reserves

Sacred groves operate as community-managed biodiversity reserves that protect endangered and rare species through culturally enforced exclusion. In Tawang, 36 Gonpa forest areas preserve indigenous plants and provide habitats for birds, insects, and small mammals (International Journal of Novel Research and Development, 2025). In West Kameng, sacred groves (Deopahars) are rich in medicinal herbs, orchids, and endemic plants (Scribd, 2025). Their key characteristics include dense canopy cover that protects understory vegetation and maintains microclimates; high species richness of flora and fauna, including rare and endemic taxa; and cultural protection via belief in deities or spirits that deters exploitation.

Customary Institutions and Community Governance

Customary institutions like village Kebangs (Adi), Nyele village councils (Nyishi), and monastic authorities (Monpa) play crucial roles in environmental governance by

regulating resource use, resolving conflicts, and enforcing taboos (Chaudhuri, 2008; Singh et al.). These bodies set rules for hunting, fishing, and harvesting; mediate disputes over land, water, and forest resources; and impose social and spiritual sanctions on violators. In the Adi's Community Reserve Forest (CRF) initiative, village-level committees and customary institutions are proposed to manage community forests collaboratively with scientists and government agencies, illustrating a hybrid governance model that integrates local norms with formal conservation frameworks (Singh et al., 2011).

CHALLENGES AND THREATS

Modernization and Market Forces

The last two decades have seen a boom in timber trade in Arunachal Pradesh, leading to indiscriminate exploitation of forest resources that contradicts traditional conservation ethics. This exploitation has been facilitated by the active nexus of powerful elites, even as people in interior villages continue to uphold traditional belief systems. Market forces and globalisation have introduced narrow individualism and instant culture, eroding the sense of collectivism, respect, and reciprocity with the surrounding ecosystem. Materialist development paradigms prioritise economic growth over ecological sustainability, undermining traditional values.

Climate Change and Environmental Anomalies

Climate change poses significant threats to biocultural diversity and livelihood security in Arunachal Pradesh. Traditional knowledge holders report: Erratic rainfall, Unpredictable floods and droughts disrupt agricultural cycles and resource availability (Singh et al., 2011). Rising temperatures affect plant phenology, animal behaviour, and water availability. Species diversity in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems is declining due to heavy silting, temperature fluctuations, and habitat degradation, leading to Biodiversity loss. If current trends continue, 95.64% of traditional knowledge holders believe that biocultural diversity and the sustainability of subsistence livelihoods would be threatened.

Erosion of Oral Transmission

Younger generations are increasingly disconnected from elders and traditional knowledge holders, risking the loss of intergenerational knowledge transmission (Murtem & Chaudhry, 2014). Urbanisation, formal education, and migration to towns for employment contribute to this erosion. Now, younger generations consume adulterated market foods and drink dirty town water, leading to increased diseases. The alarming rate of erosion in knowledge about biodiversity and culture among the younger generation aggravates the threat of climate change to their culture and biodiversity.

Policy Gaps and Institutional Neglect

Government policies in Arunachal Pradesh have been remiss in joining hands with Indigenous communities to gain an understanding of their time-tested traditional environmental knowledge (Singh et al., 2011). Despite the recognised importance of Traditional ecological knowledge in biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation, indigenous voices are often absent in academic, policy, and public discourses. Even IPCC reports have not adequately considered the role of Indigenous peoples in climate change mitigation. In Arunachal Pradesh, state developmental and environmental policies have not integrated Traditional Ecological Knowledge into planning and implementation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Documentation and Safeguarding of Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Systematic ethnographic fieldwork, audiovisual recording, and community mapping are urgently needed to preserve Traditional Ecological Knowledge before it disappears (Murtem & Chaudhry, 2014). Initiatives should include Oral history projects such as recording elders' knowledge of plants, animals, weather indicators, and cultural practices. Establishing Community archives as local repositories of traditional knowledge managed by tribal communities. Also creating Digital platforms as accessible databases of Traditional Ecological Knowledge for education and research, with community consent and benefit-sharing.

Integration into Conservation Policy

Traditional Ecological Knowledge should be integrated into environmental policy and conservation planning. A few recommendations include:

Community Reserve Forests

Expand the CRF model across Arunachal Pradesh, linking Indigenous-managed forests with Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and other conservation incentives (Singh et al., 2011).

Co-management Agreements

Establish collaborative management of protected areas involving tribal communities, customary institutions, and government agencies (Singh et al., 2011).

Legal Recognition

Provide legal recognition for sacred groves and customary conservation areas to protect them from exploitation (International Journal of Innovative Research and Technology, 2023).

Education and Capacity Building

Traditional ecological knowledge should be incorporated into formal and non-formal education systems through strategies such as:

Curriculum Integration

Including Traditional Ecological Knowledge in school curricula, teaching students about local biodiversity, traditional practices, and environmental ethics (Kuey Journal, 2024; International Journal of Innovative Research and Technology, 2023).

Intergenerational Learning

Facilitating knowledge exchange between elders and youth through community workshops and cultural programs (Singh et al., 2011; Murtem & Chaudhry, 2014).

Training Programs

Providing formal training to tribal communities on climate change adaptation, sustainable agriculture, and forest management, building on their existing knowledge (Singh et al., 2011).

Reviving Cultural and Religious Beliefs

Reviving and reawakening cultural and religious beliefs with ecological significance can act as a powerful deterrent against exploitation. A few suggestive initiatives are:

Rituals and Festivals

Supporting community-led rituals, festivals, and ceremonies related to nature conservation (Chaudhuri, 2008; International Journal of Innovative Research and Technology, 2023).

Spiritual Education

Incorporating ecological ethics and spiritual values into religious teachings and community discourses (International Journal of Innovative Research and Technology, 2023).

Cultural Revitalization

Promoting traditional arts, music, dance, and storytelling that encode ecological knowledge (Murtem & Chaudhry, 2014; Kuey Journal, 2024).

Equitable Benefit-Sharing

Conservation initiatives must ensure equitable benefit-sharing with tribal communities through some recommendations such as:

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) Incentives

Ensuring that rewards and incentives from REDD and other conservation programs reach community members who manage forests (Singh et al., 2011).

Fair Compensation

Providing fair compensation for ecosystem services provided by Indigenous-managed lands (Singh et al., 2011).

Community Ownership

Respecting community ownership and control over CRFs and sacred groves, avoiding government appropriation (Singh et al., 2011; International Journal of Innovative Research and Technology, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This research paper has demonstrated that folklore and tradition in Arunachal Pradesh function as sophisticated systems of ecological governance, encoding practical knowledge about forests, water, plants, animals, and sustainable resource use. Through case studies of the Adi, Nyishi, Galo, Monpa, Apatani, and Aka tribes, it has shown how myths, rituals, taboos, and sacred groves regulate human interaction with the natural world and protect biodiversity.

However, these knowledge systems face existential threats from modernisation, climate change, and the erosion of oral transmission. The boom in timber trade, market forces, and materialist development paradigms have undermined traditional conservation ethics, while younger generations are increasingly disconnected from elders and traditional knowledge holders. To safeguard ecological knowledge, it is essential to safeguard folklore itself. This requires systematic documentation, integration into conservation policy, education and capacity building, revival of cultural and religious beliefs, and equitable benefit-sharing with tribal communities. As the Adi traditional knowledge holders warned, if current trends of climate variability and cultural erosion continue, the future of their ethnicity, food habits, and culture is uncertain. The question is not merely whether they will be able to conserve their food habits, agricultural practices, and knowledge-nurturing institutions, but whether the broader society will recognise and support the value of Indigenous ecological wisdom in addressing the global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Safeguarding folklore is inseparable from safeguarding ecological knowledge itself. In Arunachal Pradesh, as elsewhere, Indigenous knowledge systems offer not only cultural richness but also practical solutions for sustainable resource management and

environmental conservation. Integrating this wisdom into contemporary policy and education is not merely an act of cultural preservation but a strategic imperative for ecological resilience and human well-being in the 21st century.

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