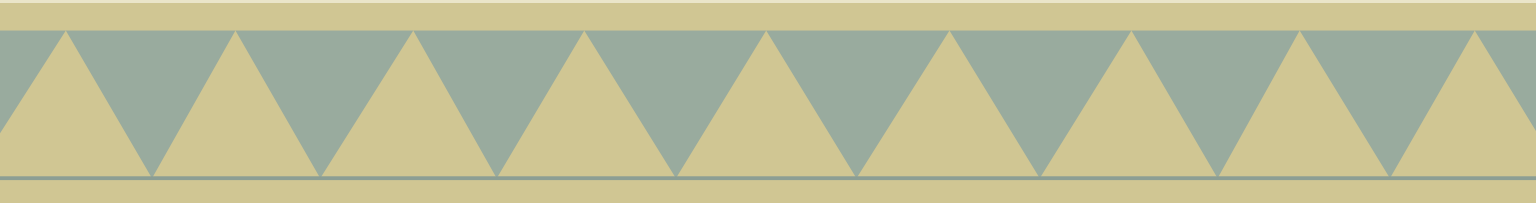
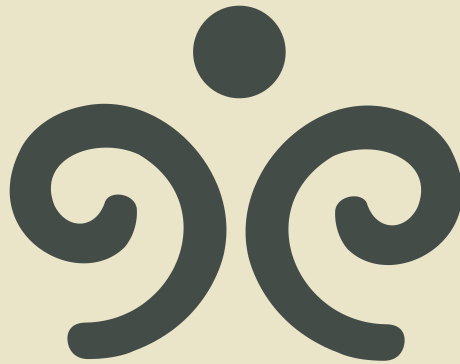




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ANCESTRAL MEMORY, STORYTELLING, AND ORAL TRADITIONS CARRY CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

Human societies have long relied on ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions to preserve knowledge, values, and identity across generations. These interconnected practices remain essential for sustaining both cultural and ecological identities, particularly among indigenous and traditional communities. This study examines how ancestral memory functions as a living repository of collective experiences, beliefs, and practices that connect communities to their past while guiding present and future generations. Beyond preserving cultural heritage, ancestral memory also contains valuable ecological knowledge related to seasonal cycles, biodiversity, medicinal plants, and sustainable resource management.

Storytelling serves as a primary medium for transmitting this knowledge. Through myths, folktales, legends, and narratives, communities communicate moral values, social norms, and environmental wisdom. Stories often encode ecological insights, foster respect for nature, and encourage sustainable practices by emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world. Oral traditions—including songs, chants, proverbs, rituals, and storytelling—further strengthen collective identity, maintain linguistic diversity, and adapt traditional knowledge to changing social contexts.

The study highlights the close relationship between cultural and ecological identity, demonstrating how traditional practices, rituals, and spiritual beliefs are deeply rooted in ecological systems. However, these knowledge systems face significant challenges due to globalization, urbanization, formal education, digital communication, and the decline of indigenous languages. The erosion of oral traditions risks the loss of valuable cultural heritage and ecological wisdom.

To address these challenges, the paper emphasizes the importance of documenting oral histories, revitalizing indigenous languages, integrating traditional knowledge into education, and utilizing digital technologies for preservation. Sustaining ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions is crucial for cultural continuity, environmental stewardship, and the promotion of a more sustainable future.

Keywords: Ancestral, Cultural, Heritage, Identity, Knowledge, Memory, Traditions, Values.

INTRODUCTION

Human societies have always depended on memory and communication to sustain their existence across generations. Long before the advent of written records, communities relied on

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ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions¹ as vital tools for preserving knowledge, values, and identity. These interconnected practices continue to play a crucial role in shaping both cultural and ecological identity², especially among indigenous and traditional societies. This study explores how ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions function as carriers of cultural heritage³ and ecological wisdom, ensuring continuity and resilience in a rapidly changing world.

Ancestral memory⁴ refers to the collective remembrance of a community's past, passed down through generations. It is not merely a recollection of events but a living archive of experiences, beliefs, and practices. Unlike written history, ancestral memory is dynamic, evolving with each retelling and reinterpretation. It embodies the essence of a community's identity, linking the present with the past.

Ancestral memory works vitally in shaping both cultural and ecological identity, particularly in communities where knowledge is transmitted through spoken traditions rather than inscribed records. It refers to the shared remembrance of a people—stories, beliefs, practices, and experiences—that are inherited by generations. The memories function not only as reminiscences of the past; but also, they function as living knowledge systems that guide present behaviour and future sustainability.

Cultural identity⁵ is deeply rooted in ancestral memory. Traditions such as myths, rituals, songs, and folklore preserve a community's worldview and values. Through storytelling, elders communicate moral lessons, social norms, and historical consciousness. For example, many native groups narrate origin stories that explain their connection with the land, ancestors, and spiritual forces. These narratives preach a sense of belonging and continuity, ensuring that people can comprehend their place within a larger cultural framework. Thus, ancestral memory becomes the basis upon which cultural identity is constructed and maintained.

At the same time, ancestral memory is closely linked to ecological identity. Traditional ecological knowledge⁶, embedded in ancestral memory, reflects generations of interaction with the natural environment. This knowledge includes understanding seasonal cycles, biodiversity⁷, agricultural practices, and resource management. For example, indigenous farming techniques, such as shifting cultivation or crop rotation, are often based on deep ecological insights accumulated over centuries. Similarly, knowledge of medicinal plants and their uses is preserved through oral transmission, contributing to sustainable healthcare practices.

Ancestral memory also promotes a sense of responsibility toward nature. Many traditional belief systems regard the environment as sacred, inhabited by spirits or deities. Such perspectives encourage preservation and maintainable use of natural resources. Rituals associated with forests, rivers, and animals often serve as cultural mechanisms for ecological protection. By embedding environmental ethics within cultural practices, ancestral memory ensures that ecological balance is maintained.

However, the erosion of ancestral memory poses a significant threat to both cultural and ecological identity. Modernisation, urbanisation, and globalisation have led to the decline of oral traditions and indigenous knowledge systems. As newer generations become detached from their inheritance, valuable ecological knowledge risks being lost. This not only weakens cultural identity but also undermines sustainable ecological observances which have been effective for centuries.

Ancestral memory has always noteworthy impact in shaping cultural identity by preserving traditions, rituals, and moral values⁸. It informs individuals about their lineage, social roles, and responsibilities within the community. For instance, many aboriginal groups remember their origins through myths of creation and migration, which reinforce kinship and continuity.

Moreover, ancestral memory is deeply connected to ecological identity. It often contains detailed knowledge about the environment, including seasonal cycles, animal behaviour, medicinal plants, and sustainable practices. The traditional knowledge, gathered through eras, enables communities to exist in synchronisation with nature. Thus, ancestral memory acts as both a cultural and ecological guide, ensuring the endurance of both people and their environment.

Through story telling ancestral memory is transmitted. Stories are not mere narratives; they are vehicles too of knowledge, ethics, and identity. Through storytelling, complex ideas are simplified and made accessible, allowing them to be remembered and shared easily. Culturally, storytelling helps in preserving traditions and social norms. Folktales, myths, and legends convey ethical teachings and cultural principles. Stories about heroes, tricksters, or deities reflect the ideals and beliefs of a community. They teach individuals about courage, honesty, respect, and cooperation, thereby reinforcing cultural identity.

In terms of ecological identity, storytelling often encodes environmental knowledge. Many traditional stories include references to landscapes, animals, and natural phenomena. These stories may explain the origins of rivers, mountains, or forests, or describe the relationships between humans and other living beings. Such narratives foster a deep respect for nature and promote sustainable practices. For instance, stories that personify animals or natural elements encourage empathy and responsibility towards the environment. A tale about a forest spirit protecting trees may discourage deforestation, while a story about a sacred river may promote its conservation.

Through the very practice of storytelling cultural and ecological identity is preserved, expressed, and transmitted across generations. It functions as the archive of knowledge in many societies, especially indigenous and rural communities. It connects people to their past while guiding their relationship with the natural world in the present. In the field of storytelling, grandparents have a significant role. The author Dee Write remarks that:

“Grandparents play several key roles in modern family life, offering support, wisdom, and love in equal measure. When parents are busy or need an extra hand, grandparents often are the unsung heroes who create family bonding by stepping up to the plate and providing children with a safe environment to learn and grow. Beyond being cherished family members, the role of grandparents helps to shape the lives of their grandchildren—imparting life lessons, sharing family stories and creating cherished memories that can last a lifetime.” (Write)

Grandparents carry ancestral memory, cultural continuity, and ecological identity within the family. As living bridges between the past and the present, they bear within them a wealth of experiences, traditions, and knowledge which might otherwise fade in rapidly modernising societies. Their existence ensures that heritage is not merely remembered, but lived and practiced.

One of the most significant contributions of grandparents is their role as custodians of ancestral memory. Through storytelling, they recount family histories, genealogies, and personal experiences that connect younger generations to their roots. These narratives often include accounts of migration, struggle, resilience, and social change, helping children think about their identity. Unlike written history, these oral accounts are rich with emotion, detail, and personal insight, making them more relatable and impactful. In this way, grandparents help preserve a sense of continuity and belonging.

Cultural identity is also deeply nurtured through the influence of grandparents. They pass down customs, rituals, language, and traditional practices that define a community's way of life. Whether it is teaching traditional songs, celebrating festivals, preparing indigenous foods, or guiding religious practices, grandparents actively engage younger family members in cultural learning. In many

households, they are the primary transmitters of the mother tongue, ensuring linguistic continuity. This cultural transmission is essential in maintaining diversity and resisting the homogenising effects of globalisation.

Equally important is the role grandparents play in fostering ecological identity. Having often lived closer to nature, especially in rural or traditional settings, they teach children about seasonal cycles, local flora and fauna, sustainable practices, and respect for natural resources. For instance, they may share insights on traditional farming methods, herbal medicine, or water conservation techniques. Such knowledge is not only practical but also installs a sense of responsibility towards the environment. In an age of ecological crisis, this wisdom becomes increasingly relevant, encouraging sustainable living and environmental stewardship. It has been remarked that, "Grandparents' decisions to transmit traditional knowledge and values are usually active choices driven by the wish to leave their descendants a legacy of traditions that ensures cultural continuity in their grandchildren as the bearers of social and cultural capital." (Emeterio, María Ángeles Valdemoros San et al.)

Moreover, grandparents contribute to moral and emotional development. Their life experiences provide a foundation for imparting values such as patience, empathy, resilience, and respect. Through their guidance, children learn the importance of community, cooperation, and ethical living. The intergenerational bond also creates a nurturing environment where children feel secure and valued, strengthening family cohesion.

Culturally, storytelling shapes identity by preserving traditions, beliefs, and collective experiences. Folktales, myths, legends, and oral narratives carry the spirit of a community's heritage. Through these stories, individuals come to know about their ancestors, social norms, and moral values. Lilli Eve, the Associate Editor and Sponsor of *Kailon Magazine* in her work observes that:

Folklore has long been a fundamental aspect of human culture, providing a window into the beliefs, values, and traditions of societies throughout history. Encompassing myths, legends, songs, dances, proverbs, and rituals, folklore serves as both a historical record and a living tradition that evolves with each retelling and performance. Its importance lies not only in entertainment but in its profound role in cultural preservation, moral education, and fostering social cohesion. (Eve)

Myths often explain how a community came into existence and establish a deep emotional and spiritual bond with specific landscapes. These narratives help the individuals to understand their role within the community. Storytelling also reinforces language, customs, and rituals, which are essential components of cultural identity. At the same time, storytelling is closely tied to ecological identity, as it encodes traditional ecological knowledge and environmental ethics. Many stories are rooted in observations of nature and reflect a deep understanding of ecological processes⁹. They describe seasonal changes, animal behaviour, and the interdependence of living beings. For instance, stories about animals often symbolise human traits while also teaching respect for wildlife. Similarly, narratives about forests, rivers, and mountains highlight their importance and promote conservation. In this way, storytelling becomes a tool for educating younger generations about sustainable living.

Moreover, storytelling often represents the flora and fauna as sacred or spiritually significant. In many traditions, aspects of nature are personified or associated with deities and ancestral spirits. Such representations encourage reverence and responsibility toward the environment. When a forest is seen as the dwelling place of spirits or a river as a life-giving entity, exploitation is restrained,

and preservation becomes a moral duty. Thus, storytelling integrates ecological awareness into the cultural fabric of society.

Children's literature is also another factor in preserving and transmitting ancestral memory, cultural heritage, and ecological identity across generations. As one of the earliest forms of learning and imagination for young minds, it shapes how children perceive their past, understand their culture, and relate to the natural world. Through stories, poems, folktales, and illustrated narratives, children's literature becomes an authoritative weapon for cultural continuity and environmental awareness.

Besides, stories rooted in oral traditions—such as folktales, myths, legends, and family narratives—introduce children to the experiences and wisdom of earlier generations. These narratives often reflect the struggles, values, and achievements of ancestors, helping children develop a sense of nativehood and identity. By engaging with such stories, children not only learn about their heritage but also internalise lessons about courage, resilience, and moral responsibility. In this way, literature becomes a repository of collective memory, ensuring that the past remains alive in the present.

Cultural identity is also deeply embedded in children's literature. Books written in regional languages or reflecting indigenous traditions help preserve linguistic diversity and cultural uniqueness. Through depictions of festivals, rituals, dress, food habits, and social customs, children gain familiarity with their cultural environment. Literature also introduces them to cultural symbols, values, and belief systems that shape their worldview. Importantly, children's literature can counter cultural erosion caused by globalization by reaffirming local identities and traditions. When children see their own culture represented in stories, they develop pride and confidence in their heritage.

In addition, children's literature is a factor in fostering ecological identity. Many traditional and contemporary children's stories emphasise the association between humans and nature, portraying forests, rivers, animals, and landscapes as living entities deserving care and respect. Folktales often include moral lessons about environmental balance, conservation, and coexistence. Modern children's books further address topics like climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable living in ways that are accessible and engaging. By cultivating empathy for nature, these narratives encourage children to develop environmentally responsible attitudes from an early age.

The critic Manuela Pulimeno and others in their work “Children's literature to promote students' global development and wellbeing,” remarks that:

Myths, fables and fairytales – originally founded on oral tradition – allowed adults to communicate with young people in an uninterrupted process until nowadays. Tales have been told everywhere and in every time, to educate, entertain and increase individuals' awareness about moral principles and customs, thus representing an important part of traditional heritage as well as a way to reinforce tolerance and mutual knowledge among different populations. (Pulimeno et al.)

Illustrations and storytelling techniques in children's literature enhance this connection by making abstract ideas tangible. Visual representations of natural settings and cultural practices help children better understand and relate to them. Moreover, interactive storytelling—through reading aloud, dramatisation, or discussion—strengthens the transmission of these values within families and educational settings.

Storytelling also adapts to changing contexts while retaining its core values. Even in contemporary settings, stories continue to evolve, incorporating modern challenges such as

environmental degradation and climate change. Writers, educators, and activists use storytelling to raise awareness about ecological issues and inspire action.

Never the less, the weakening of verbal practices in the face of modernisation postures a challenge. As digital media replaces traditional forms of storytelling, there is a risk of losing valuable knowledge embedded in these narratives. Preserving storytelling practices, therefore, becomes essential for maintaining cultural diversity and ecological wisdom.

The concepts of Shruti and Smriti occupy a foundational place in the conservation and transmission of Indian social and organic identity. Rooted in the depth of Hinduism, these two categories of knowledge serve as complementary pillars that sustain continuity between past and present, confirming that both spiritual wisdom and practical life ethics are transmitted by generations.

Shruti, meaning “that which is heard,” refers to the body of sacred texts considered to be divinely revealed. Chief among these are the Vedas, which include hymns, rituals, and philosophical teachings. Shruti texts were meticulously memorised and recited, preserving not only linguistic precision but also the embedded worldview. Within these texts, nature is revered as sacred—rivers, forests, mountains, and animals are often personified as deities. This spiritualisation of nature cultivates a deep ecological consciousness, encouraging respect, restraint, and concord with the environment. For example, the worship of rivers like the Ganges reflects an understanding of water as life-giving and sacred, fostering practices that traditionally discouraged pollution and exploitation.

On the other hand, Smriti, meaning “that which is remembered,” includes an extensive variety of texts derived from human authorship, including epics, law codes, and moral treatises. Important examples include *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, as well as *The Manusmriti*. Unlike Shruti, Smriti is adaptable and context-sensitive, letting it to evolve with changing social and environmental conditions. These texts provide guidelines for ethical living, social organization, and duties toward nature. The epics, in particular, are rich with ecological imagery and values—forests serve as spaces of exile, learning, and spiritual growth, emphasizing coexistence rather than domination. Prof Kapil Bhatia remarks:

The Gurukul System’s instructional methods included oral transmission of knowledge, memorization (shruti and smriti), recitation, and in-depth discussions (Vāda). Key texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, and Dharmashastras were central to the curriculum, promoting values of dharma (righteous duty), artha (prosperity), and moksha (liberation). It was an egalitarian system where knowledge was accessible to students from diverse social backgrounds, fostering a sense of community and unity. (45)

Together, Shruti and Smriti create a holistic framework for cultural continuity. Shruti provides the metaphysical and spiritual foundation, instilling reverence for the cosmos and natural order, while Smriti translates these ideals into practical norms and everyday conduct. This dual structure ensures that ecological ethics are not abstract concepts but lived experiences embedded in rituals, customs, and social responsibilities.

Moreover, these traditions play role in sustaining indigenous knowledge systems, including traditional ecological knowledge related to agriculture, medicine, and biodiversity conservation. Sacred groves, seasonal festivals, and ritual practices often draw directly from these texts, reinforcing community bonds and environmental stewardship. Manjula Nanavati says that:

For thousands of years this legacy was transmitted through the oral tradition, in the Guruparampara system of a succession of pupils and teachers forming an unbroken chain through

the generations. Even up to the 8th century AD it was considered sacrilege to reduce the Vedas to writing, for education was not recognized as merely the ability to read, write and understand, but something to be realized and assimilated as an organic part of oneself.

In the modern context of environmental degradation and cultural homogenisation, the relevance of Shruti and Smriti becomes even more significant. They offer a time-tested model of sustainable living rooted in respect for nature and cultural diversity. By revisiting and reinterpreting these ancient sources, contemporary society can rediscover values that promote ecological balance and cultural resilience.

Oral traditions encompass a wide range of practices, including storytelling, songs, chants, proverbs, and rituals. These traditions are performed and shared within communities, creating a sense of collective identity and belonging. Unlike written texts, oral traditions are interactive and participatory, allowing individuals to engage actively in the preservation of their heritage. One of the key features of oral traditions is their adaptability. Mritunjay Kumar says:

The oral tradition of Indian communication has been unparalleled globally, as no other ancient culture has sustained such a prolonged oral tradition. Indian philosophy recognizes six means of valid knowledge (pramanas): perception, inference, comparison, testimony, presumption, and non-apprehension. In contrast, modern Western philosophy primarily relies on 'perception' as the basis for truth, accepting only what is directly observable and verifiable through reason.

As they are transmitted orally, they can be modified to suit changing contexts while retaining their core message. This flexibility ensures that cultural and ecological knowledge remains relevant and meaningful across generations.

Oral traditions are also useful in maintaining linguistic diversity¹⁰. Aishwarya R. P. remarks that, "Linguistic diversity is important because languages carry culture, identity, and knowledge. When communities use and preserve their languages, they protect history, strengthen belonging, and maintain unique ways of thinking. Losing a language means losing cultural memory and wisdom that cannot be replaced."

Language is an essential part of cultural identity, and many indigenous languages are preserved primarily through oral means. These languages often contain unique expressions and concepts related to the environment, reflecting a keen insight into local ecosystems. In addition, oral traditions help as a weapon to fight against cultural erosion. In this age of globalisation and modernisation, many communities use verbal practice to assert their identity and preserve their heritage. By continuing to practice and transmit these traditions, they resist the homogenising effects of dominant cultures.

Long before the advent of written records, societies relied on spoken word—stories, songs, proverbs, chants, and rituals—to pass information across generations. Traditions are not merely artistic expressions; they function as dynamic systems of memory that sustain both cultural continuity and environmental awareness. Asha Rani Mathur has written, "In 2003, UNESCO proclaimed the Vedic chant as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity a tribute to a unique canon considered the oldest unbroken oral tradition in existence." (7)

Culturally, oral traditions act in shaping identity by preserving the collective history and values of a community. Folklore, myths, and legends communicate the origins, beliefs, and social norms that define a group. Through repeated narration, these stories reinforce a shared sense of belonging and continuity. For example, ancestral tales often explain migration patterns, heroic deeds, or the establishment of communities, thereby linking individuals to their heritage. Language itself is preserved through oral traditions, as storytelling and songs maintain linguistic richness and

diversity. In this way, oral traditions act as living repositories of cultural uniqueness.

There is a great relation between oral traditions and ecological identity. They encode what is often referred to as traditional ecological knowledge, which reflects generations of close interaction with the natural environment. This knowledge includes understanding weather patterns, seasonal cycles, agricultural practices, and biodiversity. For instance, farmers may rely on proverbs or seasonal songs to determine the right time for sowing or harvesting crops. Similarly, oral instructions about the usage of medicinal plants gives realistic direction for healthcare rooted in nature.

Oral traditions also foster an ethical relationship with the environment. Many narratives present nature as sacred, emphasising respect and responsibility toward natural resources. Forests, rivers, mountains, and animals are often personified or associated with spiritual forces and ancestral spirits. Such representations discourage exploitation and promote conservation. Rituals and taboos embedded in oral traditions often serve as informal systems of environmental regulation, ensuring sustainable use of resources. For example, certain days or seasons may be designated as periods when hunting or fishing is prohibited, allowing ecosystems to regenerate.

Moreover, oral traditions are adaptable and responsive to changing environmental conditions. As communities face new ecological challenges, such as climate change or resource depletion, oral narratives evolve to incorporate new knowledge and experiences. This flexibility ensures that oral traditions remain relevant while continuing to guide sustainable practices. Nilakshi Moran remarks:

In India, folklore extends far beyond storytelling. It embodies a lived philosophy that imparts environmental ethics, nurtures ecological relationships, and fosters emotional bonds with nature. While modern conservation efforts often struggle to inspire community participation, folklore has, for centuries, woven ecology seamlessly into faith, daily practices, and collective responsibility.

However, the survival of oral traditions is increasingly threatened by modernisation, urbanisation, and the dominance of written and digital media. As younger generations move away from traditional lifestyles, the risk of losing valuable cultural and ecological knowledge takes place. The loss of oral traditions not only weakens cultural distinctiveness but also diminishes sustainable eco-friendly practices that have been refined over centuries.

OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

Cultural identity and ecological identity are closely intertwined, and ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions serve as the bridge between them. Cultural practices often reflect a community's connection with the environment, while the ecological knowledge is embedded in cultural expressions. For example, agricultural rituals, hunting practices, and seasonal festivals are often based on ecological cycles. These practices are guided by ancestral memory and reinforced through storytelling and oral traditions. Furthermore, the spiritual beliefs associated with nature shapes ecological identity. Many communities' view nature as sacred, attributing spiritual significance to elements such as rivers, forests, and mountains. These beliefs are often conveyed through stories and rituals, fostering a sense of reverence and responsibility towards the environment.

- The loss of ancestral memory and oral traditions may bring irreparable damage for both cultural and ecological identity. As traditional knowledge systems decline, communities may lose their connection to the environment, leading to unsustainable practices and ecological degradation.
- Preserving these traditions is essential for both cultural continuity and environmental sustainability. Despite their importance, ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions face

numerous challenges in the modern world.

- The spread of formal education, urbanisation, and digital media has led to a decline in oral practices. Younger generations may prioritise written and digital forms of communication, leading to a gradual loss of traditional knowledge.
- Additionally, the dominance of global languages often threatens indigenous languages, which are key carriers of oral traditions. As languages disappear, so do the unique cultural and ecological knowledge embedded within them.

SUGGESTIVE MEASURES:

- Documentation of oral histories, promotion of indigenous languages, and incorporation of traditional knowledge into education systems are some of the strategies being employed. Digital technology, although initially seen as a threat, can also be used as a tool for preservation by recording and sharing oral traditions.
- Community involvement is crucial in these efforts. Preservation should not be made obligatory from outside, rather that should be developed and carried away by the communities themselves. Empowering communities to value and sustain their traditions ensures that ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions continue to thrive.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this can be said that:

- Ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions are vital carriers of cultural and ecological identity. They preserve the past, inform the present, and guide the future. Through these practices, communities can maintain the linking with their legacy and milieu, ensuring continuity and sustainability.
- In a world increasingly dominated by written and digital communication, the importance of oral traditions should not be underestimated. They provide exceptional perceptions into human experience and environmental knowledge that cannot be fully captured in written form.
- Preserving these traditions is not only a matter of cultural heritage but also a necessity for ecological sustainability. Ultimately, the survival of cultural and ecological identity depends on our ability to recognise and value the wisdom embedded in ancestral memory, storytelling, and oral traditions.
- Ancestral memory is a vital link between culture and ecology. It preserves the identity of communities while providing practical knowledge for living in harmony with nature. Protecting and revitalising these memory systems is essential for sustaining both cultural diversity and environmental balance in the contemporary world.
- Storytelling is a vital link between culture and nature. It not only preserves the identity of communities but also fosters alliance with the environment. By transmitting knowledge, values, and ecological awareness, storytelling ensures that both cultural heritage and environmental sustainability are sustained for future generations.
- Shruti and Smriti are not merely religious or literary categories; they are dynamic instruments of cultural and ecological preservation. Their enduring legacy lies in their ability to integrate spiritual insight with practical wisdom, guiding humanity toward a sweeter association with both the culture and nature.
- Oral traditions are also indispensable for maintaining the interrelation of culture and ecology.

They preserve the identity of communities while providing practical and ethical guidance for interacting with the natural world. Safeguarding these traditions is decisive for nourishing both cultural diversity and ecological balance in an ever-changing global context.

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