



DR. MAHENDRA KUMAR MISHRA



Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra is a linguist, folklorist and educationist who has dedicated more than four decades to preserving endangered tribal voices while embedding them in modern pedagogy, earning global acclaim for voicing the Indian knowledge system embedded in tribal and rural population of India. He has promoted many tribal organisations and youths for promotion of tribal language, culture and education for tribal development.

2. Born on 1st April, 1952, in a tribal district Kalahandi, Dr. Mishra pursued his studies in Sambalpur University and received the degree of PhD in 1987. He joined as Assistant Director in Directorate of Elementary Education in Government of Odisha and served as the State Coordinator for Education of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in which he focussed on Tribal Multilingual Education.

3. Dr. Mishra's cornerstone contribution lies in multilingual education (MLE), where he has invigorated tribal language and culture as tools for learning. Leading initiatives at the state government of Odisha, he spearheaded MLE programs in 21 tribal languages (1996-2012), further expanding to Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and Assam through Language and Learning Foundation, New Delhi. His transformative teacher training program 'Rupantar' equips educators to deliver primary education in mother tongues, fostering school-community linkages that integrate local knowledge. These efforts, aligned with, UNESCO, NCERT and NEP 2020, bridge cultural gaps, boosting literacy and retention in tribal schools— as detailed in his book *Erai Erai: Multilingual Education in Tribal Schools of India* (2023).

4. As an enthusiastic scholar of tribal oral traditions, Dr. Mishra has preserved rich folklore through seminal works like *Oral Epics of Kalahandi* (2007), *Saora Tales and Songs* (2005), *Paharia Oral Tradition* (2021), and *Ramkatha in Oral Tradition of Odisha* (2025). He has translated global epics like Finland's *Kalevala* into Odia. His efforts safeguard cosmology, myths, oral epics, and songs from Odisha's tribes—Gond, Santali, Kondh, Paharia, Saora, Banjara and others—infusing them into curricula of primary education to higher education to make education culturally resonant. He is the member of Language Development Board, Centre of Tribal Oral Literature, and Committee for translation of Constitution of India in scheduled languages, in Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.

5. Internationally, Dr. Mishra has advised Nepal's MLE policy, lectured at China's CASS; Hanyang University, South Korea; Thailand's Mahidol University, and Russia's Academy of Sciences, and collaborated with UNESCO in Bangladesh representing the culture of India. Through Sahitya Akademi affiliations, he ensures safeguarding of non-scheduled languages and oral tradition.

6. Dr. Mishra has been honoured with several awards which includes the UNESCO's International Mother Language Award in 2023 (first Indian to get this award); Veer Shankar Shah Raghunath Shah Award (2009) from Madhya Pradesh; the Kalevala Award (2002) from Finland and the Odisha Sahitya Akademi Award (1999).