



## Editorial

### Editorial Introduction: Inaugural Issue of *Indigenous Wisdom*

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The legacy of the colonial process to marginalize the indigenous people, dismantling their culture, belief system, education, knowledge on various perspectives, and defining them as dirty, superstitious, and illiterate has been continuing even in the twenty-first century. The neocolonial perspectives of dehumanizing the natives to describe the non-native as superior and cultured and attaching knowledge with only themselves have not only peripheralized the indigenous people of the world but also disrooted us from our past and forced us to believe in the Western Knowledge System. The dichotomy between nature and culture has also made us disregard the scientific attachment of the indigenous people to nature and define them as wild and barbarous. In order to decolonize the colonial mindset of the non-natives living in contemporary times, *Indigenous Wisdom: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Indigenous Studies* unfolds as a meeting ground, where ancestral voices echo into contemporary thought, and today's discourse receives them with deep respect and attentiveness. *Indigenous Wisdom* is founded on the conviction that Indigenous knowledge systems are not mere vestiges of the past, but vibrant, evolving frameworks of understanding. Deeply rooted in oral traditions, ecological conservation, artistic expression, spiritual insight, and political engagement, indigenous ways of knowing the world have sustained communities for ages, offering profound lessons in sustainability, elasticity, and interpersonal harmony that many academic disciplines recognize. With the aim of representing the Indigenous voices, methods, and worldviews at the centre of scholarly enquiry, that have long been sidelined, distorted, or appropriated without reciprocity, the journal has published its inaugural issue. With a huge support from academia, the inaugural issue has defined itself as a hub of research works that navigate across continents, disciplines, and lineages.

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**Article History:** Published: August 2025

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**Citation:** Acharya, Indranil. (2025). Editorial Introduction: Inaugural Issue of *Indigenous Wisdom*. *Indigenous Wisdom: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Indigenous Studies*. 1(1). DOI: To be assigned. <<https://indigenouswisdom.in/v1n1/v1n1W00.pdf>>

The subversion of the oral epistemologies of the natives to communicate as well as to transform their knowledge over the ages has been strongly defended by Dimple M Scaria in her study on *Around the Hearth: Khasi Legends* (2007) by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, an eminent Khasi writer and a cultural upholder from Meghalaya, India. In her article entitled “Indigenous Flame: Cultural Memory as Oral Epistemology in *Around the Hearth: Khasi Legends*”, Scaria has reflected on the oral tradition of the Khasi people and shown how storytelling functions as a mode of knowledge transmission, identity formation, and resistance. She has shown how Nongkynrih’s narrative has deepened the appreciation and preservation of Khasi heritage across a wide and diverse audience, fostering vibrant intercultural dialogue and a renewed receptivity to Indigenous knowledge systems. It has also studied Nongkynrih’s challenge against the privilege provided to the elite, Western, written documents in the academia, and his promotion of the intellectual rigor of oral narratives, supporting Johann Gottfried von Herder’s view that “oral literature of a people was both the highest and truest expression of its authentic national culture and the appropriate foundation of its national literature.” (Bauman, 1986, p.1)

The supervision of the Indigenous knowledge system has been exemplified by Anil Kumar and Dr Seema Gopinath in their study on ethnomathematics of the Indian subcontinent and their argument over the appropriacy of the inclusion of traditional mathematical concepts in the pedagogy of Indian classrooms, displacing the Westernized version of mathematics. In their article entitled “Integrating Ethnomathematics in Indian Classrooms: Strengthening Conceptual Understanding through Cultural Relevance”, Kumar and Gopinath have argued the importance of ethnomathematics as it “links students’ diverse ways of *knowing, doing, and learning* in culturally embedded contexts in order to bridge school mathematics.” (Rosa & Oliveria, 2020, p.9) Their research work has focused on investigating the technique for developing mathematical and conceptual understanding among students, understanding the challenges that are associated with implementing ethnomathematics in the classroom, and identifying the potential for improving ethnomathematics in the classroom. They have emphasized that ethnomathematics enriches student learning by linking mathematical concepts to their cultural heritage, rendering the subject more engaging and meaningful. It promotes a multidisciplinary pedagogy that deepens curriculum design while fostering a sense of inclusion among learners from varied backgrounds. As India's educational methodologies continue to evolve, the integration of ethnomathematics holds promise for making mathematics instruction more contextually grounded and culturally responsive.

Aniket Pandya and Nidhi Shendurnikar, PhD, turn our attention to Gujarat’s folk dance forms in their research article entitled “Artistic and Cultural Revival in the Folk-Art Landscape of Gujarat: A Study on Bhavai and Garba.” Their study traces the resurgence of these traditional art forms, examining how they serve as vehicles for cultural expression, community cohesion, and political commentary. The authors highlight the role of artists, institutions, and audiences in sustaining these practices, underscoring the dynamic interplay between heritage and innovation. The research work has shown how Bhavai and Garba serve as living repositories of traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and indigenous wisdom. Positioned at the confluence of folk-art traditions and Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), this research undertakes a comprehensive and methodical documentation of the historical roots, narrative forms, and artistic expressions inherent in Bhavai and Garba. These art forms encapsulate profound indigenous insights that reflect the ethos of India's cultural fabric. Their research work has envisioned the importance of

folk dances to share the indigenous knowledge system, as N Arinze in his *African Dance and Society* (2000) stresses that dance is a dynamic form of expression that embodies the geography, physiology, spirituality, politics, and history of the communities from which it originates.

The interdisciplinarity of indigenous studies has also been explored by Erwin S Fernandez with his study of select short stories and novellas of Leonarda “Amor Cico” Carrera, commonly known as Amor Cico, an unsung writer of the Pangasinan region of Philippines, in his research article entitled “Casanovas and Loyal Men: Images of Men in the Pangasinan Short Stories and Novella of Amor Cico” from gender perspectives. Fernandez has analysed the images of playboys and loyal men in the writings of Amor Cico to highlight the dominance of the male characters over the female ones. The researcher has also analysed select short stories of Amor Cico from autobiographical perspectives. The essay reflects that Carrera's stories consistently highlight the literary profession, with four of her male protagonists portrayed as writers. In her novella *Celia*, the titular character, an aspiring journalist, frequently contributes to a magazine, subtly reflecting Carrera's own initiation into writing. This creative thread pays homage to Maria Magsano, editor of *Pangasinan Review* and Carrera's early mentor, whose influence shaped the trajectory of her literary career. Thus, the article fulfills the aim of the journal to pronounce the voice of the indigenous people in the colonized parts of the world, as Pangasinan was once colonized by Spain. Marie Battiste stresses, “The voices of these victims of empire, once predominantly silenced in the social sciences, have been not only resisting colonization in thought and actions but also attempting to restore indigenous knowledge and heritage.” (Battiste, 2011, p. xvi)

In “Rooted in Marriage Rituals: Exploring the Ecospiritual Connection Between Trees and the Kudmi Community of Jharkhand”, Hare Krishna Kuiry examines the Kudmi community's ecospiritual connection to trees through marriage ceremonies. This ethnographic study reveals how the cultural practices of the Kudmi community living mostly in the state of Jharkhand in eastern India encode ecological knowledge and spiritual values, fostering a sense of kinship with the natural world. He has explored that marriage, in Kudmi tradition, transcends its role as a mere social contract. It is a sacred covenant, affirmed by ancestral spirits and the elemental forces of nature. Trees serve not only as powerful symbols but also as active participants in these rituals. Specific species are selected for worship, offerings, and ceremonial acts, embodying themes of fertility, protection, and generational continuity. From the careful choice of the wedding site to the planting of saplings and the summoning of forest deities, every element reflects the Kudmis' deep veneration for nature as a sentient, sacred presence. This article follows the concepts founded by critics like James G Frazer in *The Worship of Nature* (1926), and Max Müller in *Natural Religion* (1888), and subverts colonial exploitation of ecology.

Mamta Mehrania and Dinesh Babu P. explore Indigenous resilience in Brandon Hobson's *The Removed* in their article “The Native Uncanny and Sustainable Survivance: The Land as a Spirited Site of Historical Trauma, Indian Ghosts, and Indigenous Resilience in Brandon Hobson's *The Removed*.” Through literary analysis, they unpack themes of historical trauma, land as a spirited site, and the spectral presence of Indigenous ghosts. Their work bridges literature, psychology, and Indigenous studies, offering a nuanced understanding of ‘survivance’ as both resistance and renewal. Through critical analysis informed by the concept of the uncanny and Gerald Vizenor's theory of survivance, which articulates how Indigenous people have resisted colonization and preserved cultural identity, this study

examines how the Native uncanny intersects with key Sustainable Development Goals, such as reducing inequality and promoting justice and peace. It challenges the dominant narrative that frames systemic exclusion as positive discrimination. The analysis reveals that the spirit in *The Removed* operates not as a passive emblem of loss, but as an active agent of cultural memory and Indigenous resilience. By foregrounding the assertive presence of Indigenous characters, the research underscores the capacity of Native American literature to facilitate healing, reclaim culture, and advance social justice. Rather than being defined by trauma, these characters embody continuity, turning experiences of haunting into acts of empowerment, affirming Indigenous identity as a dynamic, enduring force of preservation.

Drishti Kalra's "Bridging the Gap: The Constitution of India and the Unfinished Promise of Adivasi Rights" offers a critical exploration of how constitutional provisions, judicial interpretations, and policy initiatives have fared in protecting the rights of Adivasi communities. Drawing on landmark Supreme Court judgements, legislative frameworks, and prevailing socio-economic hurdles, it reveals entrenched barriers, such as land dispossession, cultural disintegration, and bureaucratic inertia, that obstruct the full realization of these rights. Through comparative insights from global Indigenous rights frameworks, the study underscores the urgency for responsive policy adaptation, stronger enforcement mechanisms, and authentic community engagement. The findings advocate for a convergence of legal reform, decentralized governance, and an integrated approach that weaves together legal, economic, and cultural threads, ultimately paving the way toward substantive justice and empowerment for Adivasis. Through legal analysis and historical contextualization, Kalra exposes the unfinished promises of constitutional recognition and the systemic barriers to justice. This article is a call to action for policymakers, scholars, and activists alike, urging a reimagining of governance that honors Indigenous sovereignty.

Dr. Ritika Batabyal's "Ecological Knowledge and Environment: Voices from Indigenous Literatures of India" seeks to define the concept of indigeneity and explore how India's indigenous knowledge systems have long embraced a worldview rooted in reverence for nature. These systems not only celebrate the natural world but advocate for its preservation as essential to the harmonious coexistence of all life forms, including humans. The author illustrates how Indian indigenous literature consistently evokes nature's aesthetic beauty alongside its profound capacity to restore balance across species. Arguing that ecological awareness is intrinsic to traditional Indian thought, the author contends that Western notions of sustainability, environmentalism, and ecocriticism echo themes deeply embedded in the Indian cultural and intellectual ethos.

Payel Ghosh, in her article on "Female Subjectivity & Transgressive Sexuality in Bhawaiya Musical Traditions: Mirroring the Lived Realities of North Bengal", has explored the works of unsung Bhawaiya artists like Surendranath Roy Basuniya, Shailen Roy, Jeeten Maitra, Harishchandra Pal, and Tulsi Lahiri. She has shown how the folk song of North Bengal has been instrumental in expressing the collective female voices of subjectivity and desire. This research work is crucial for understanding the role of Bhawaiya songs in challenging patriarchal norms and reconstructing the subversive subjectivity of the rural women in India. It has revealed the role of art in creating and establishing the identity of the marginalized communities.

Karma Norbu Bhutia and Dr. Mitashree Srivastava have studied the Thangka art of Sikkim in their research article, "Thangka as Sacred Heritage: Visual Pedagogy and the Lifecycles

of Buddhist Art in Sikkim”. Drawing on the frameworks of material culture and object biography and informed by ethnographic engagement with monks, artists, and lay practitioners, this study explores how Thangka art serves as a repository of ancestral knowledge, ethical discipline, and spiritual continuity. It also considers the shifting meanings of Thangka as they move between sacred and secular spaces, especially in the context of tourism, art markets, and changing pedagogies. While Thangka paintings face pressures from modernization, market demands, and ecological shifts, this research highlights the resilience of traditional art practices and the agency of local communities in preserving authenticity. By situating Thangka within its full lifecycle, from pigment preparation to ritual disposal, the paper argues for a nuanced understanding of Himalayan material culture as deeply embedded in belief, environment, and memory. Ultimately, Thangka art is presented not just as visual theology but as a vital form of cultural endurance and adaptation in the Eastern Himalayas.

Amanda Periera-Rego has studied on the issues faced by the indigenous people living in the Greater Toronto of Canada in her article entitled “Shifting the Narrative: Reconceptualization of Indigenous Peoples’ Traditional Territories in the Greater Toronto Area”. The article contends that colonial narratives have systematically invisibilized, Europeanized, and sensationalized Indigenous Peoples’ presence and significance in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). It explores how invisibilization occurs through the omission of Indigenous perspectives, particularly under the homogenizing conceptual framework of the “melting pot.” The paper advocates for a reconceptualization of the GTA grounded in culturally responsive knowledge systems that honor Indigenous Peoples’ relational connections to their traditional lands. This reconceptualization is informed by vibrant oral histories and contemporary Indigenous-led research, foregrounding Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. Finally, the paper proposes several actionable strategies to disrupt and counteract the persistence of biased narratives, including educational reform, the reaffirmation of relationality, and the integration of Indigenous place makers.

The inaugural issue closes with the review of *Dooarser Tin Lokokobi* (2024), edited by Dr. Sanjit Sarkar and Dr. Joylal Das. The reviewer, Dr Utpal Rakshit, has shown how the book transcends mere folk poetry; it stands as a declaration of folk justice, a remedy for literary marginalization, and a reawakening of the aesthetic and political voice of the overlooked. Centering on three self-trained poets from the Dooars region—Sudhir Chandra Pandit, Subal Chandra Sarkar, and Subal Chandra Pandit—it foregrounds their socioeconomically marginalized roots and lack of formal literary education. Yet, their poetic command and ability to channelize the zeitgeist through verse, mark the work as a seminal contribution to India’s folk literary heritage.

Taken together, these articles reflect the journal’s ethos: to honour Indigenous knowledge as dynamic, diverse, and deeply relevant. They demonstrate that Indigenous studies is not a niche field but a multidisciplinary domain that intersects with education, law, literature, ecology, gender, and more. The journal’s open-access model ensures that these insights are freely available, democratizing knowledge and fostering global dialogue. This issue is an invitation, to listen deeply to Indigenous voices, to learn from their wisdom, and to act in solidarity. It is a reminder that scholarship can be a form of activism, that research can be relational, and that journals can be sites of transformation. We thank the authors for their contributions, the reviewers for their insights, and the readers for their engagement. We look forward to growing together, issue by issue, toward a more inclusive, just, and

resonant scholarly future. May this be the first of many steps in a journey of shared knowledge, mutual respect, and collective empowerment.

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Dr. Indranil Acharya is professor and former Head of the Department of English at Vidyasagar University, West Bengal. His academic contributions include paper presentations at renowned international conferences hosted by Lancaster University (UK) and Bridgewater College at Virginia University (USA). Dr. Acharya has actively participated in collaborative translation projects with a range of institutions, including CENTIL (Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University), the Linguistic Research Unit at the Indian Statistical Institute (Kolkata), North Bengal University, Kalyani University, Aliah University, and CIIL (Mysore). In 2023, he was appointed as a jury member for the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar selection committee. Most recently, Professor Acharya has been honored with the prestigious Fulbright-Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence Fellowship for the 2024–25 cycle.

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