

Editorial

The Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), as the premier State Open University of West Bengal, has continually upheld its mandate of democratizing higher education while fostering rigorous academic inquiry in the social sciences. The School of Social Sciences, in particular, has built a robust tradition of nurturing interdisciplinary scholarship, interrogating emergent socio-cultural questions, and amplifying voices and epistemologies that remain marginal within mainstream academic discourse. The *NSOU Journal of Social Sciences*, now in its fifth volume, stands as an emblem of this intellectual commitment—bringing together scholars, researchers, and practitioners who rethink social realities through new theoretical vistas, methodological innovations, and ethical engagements.

This year's theme, "**Indigeneity and the Traditional Knowledge Systems**," emerges from a carefully crafted Call for Papers that sought to revisit indigenous epistemes, cultural practices, and knowledge worlds that have historically sustained communities, informed social regulation, shaped ecological ethics, and resisted colonial-modernist ruptures. The present volume responds to this call by assembling a constellation of scholarly contributions that collectively reaffirm indigenous knowledge as a living, adaptive, and future-oriented epistemic resource rather than a residual inheritance of the past.

The architecture of this issue - comprising an Editorial, an introductory engagement with the theme, five thematic sections, and book reviews - reflects a deliberate effort to map the conceptual, empirical, and ethical terrain of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). The volume brings into dialogue philosophical foundations, policy debates, rights-based concerns, pedagogical and media practices, community transitions, gendered embodiments, cultural performances, and literary as well as legal reflections. Each article contributes uniquely to the scholarly mosaic of IKS, expanding the epistemic frontiers of the field while situating traditional knowledge within broader frameworks of democracy, justice, identity, ecology, and social transformation. Collectively, these works reposition indigeneity not as a static category but as a dynamic field of practice and meaning.

Section I: Conceptual and Philosophical Foundations of Indigenous Knowledge Systems grounds the volume in foundational ontological and epistemological questions. Tanima

Banik's *Understanding Tantra as an Indigenous Knowledge System and its Significance* offers a nuanced reading of Tantra as a coherent philosophical tradition rooted in indigenous cosmologies, thereby challenging reductive or exoticized interpretations. Complementing this is Abhishek Mitra's exploration of yoga in the social and political life of the ancient Harappan Civilization, which draws upon archaeological and textual sources to locate yogic practices within early forms of collective discipline and social organization. Together, these essays foreground indigenous philosophies as structured systems of thought that predate and contest later homogenizing epistemic regimes.

Section II: Policy, Rights, Governance and the Protection of Knowledge Systems turns a critical lens on institutional, legal, and global architectures shaping the production, ownership, and vulnerability of traditional knowledge. Md. Siddique Hossain's article on preserving and promoting India's Indigenous Knowledge Systems proposes a comprehensive framework linking education, research, and heritage conservation. SK Sahadot Ali's discussion of intellectual property rights foregrounds the tensions between community-held knowledge and proprietary legal regimes, while Praveen Pathak's examination of civil society highlights its mediating role in protecting knowledge, democracy, and human rights. Soumen Rajbansi's analysis of globalization further alerts us to processes of cultural homogenization and epistemic erosion that threaten local knowledge systems. Together, these contributions underscore that the survival of indigenous knowledge is inseparable from questions of governance, justice, and global power.

Section III: Education, Media and the Dissemination of Traditional Knowledge extends the discussion into pedagogical and communicational domains. Kajal Mandal's *Bridging the Gap: Integrating Traditional Knowledge Systems into Modern Indian Education* argues for curricular and institutional reforms that meaningfully embed indigenous epistemologies within formal education. Mahua Basu's work on digital media and technology situates Indian Knowledge Systems within the digital turn, critically examining both opportunities and risks in mediating tradition through technological platforms. Priyankara Bhattacharya's historical study of agricultural technicalities in copperplate inscriptions (6th–8th century CE) through her article, *Agricultural Technicalities In a Few Copperplate Inscriptions of Early Medieval Bengal (6th–8th century CE)* offers a compelling example of how indigenous agrarian

knowledge was codified and institutionalized in early medieval Bengal. Extending this section's engagement with communication and knowledge transmission, Arunima Mukherjee's article, *Ham Radio as a Means of Disaster Management: Understanding Indian Scenario*, brings into focus an often-overlooked domain of indigenous and community-based knowledge—alternative communication infrastructures. By examining amateur (ham) radio as a non-commercial, volunteer-driven, and ethically grounded communication network, the article situates ham radio within the broader ecology of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems.

Section IV: Communities, Territories and Socio-Cultural Worlds of Indigeneity foregrounds lived experiences and grounded socio-cultural realities. Mrinal Kanti Basak's study of socio-economic changes among the Toto community documents negotiation, adaptation, and resilience among one of India's smallest indigenous groups. Subhashis Banerjee's examination of the traditional knowledge systems of the Nyishi tribe in Arunachal Pradesh offers rich insights into ritual practices, ecological stewardship, and oral traditions that sustain Nyishi lifeworlds. Soumitra Sarkar's socio-economic analysis of Jagadhatri Puja in Chandannagar reveals how ritual performance, aesthetics, and collective labour function as repositories of cultural memory and identity. Shampa Dutta's article, *Rural Women and Natural Resource Management – A Vigorous Symbiosis*, makes a crucial intervention by foregrounding women as primary custodians and transmitters of traditional ecological knowledge. Through an extensive engagement with forestry, agriculture, non-timber forest products, and joint forest management practices, the article demonstrates how women's embodied labour, cultural memory, and indigenous expertise remain central to sustainable livelihoods and environmental governance.

Section V: Embodied Traditions, Gender, Performance and Literary Resistance concludes the thematic corpus by exploring knowledge embedded in bodies, movements, texts, and normative orders. Vivek Pathak's study on the influence of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* on Southeast Asian dance traditions illustrates the trans-civilizational circulation of indigenous epics through embodied performance. Ashok Bachhar's engagement with ecofeminist environmental justice brings together gender, ecology, and indigenous cosmologies to articulate alternative ethics of care and survival. The joint article by Sudipta

Pramanik and Shri Rajdip Raha on indigenous knowledge, social justice, and gender norms in the *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita* offers a rare legal-philosophical exploration of continuities between ancient normative frameworks and contemporary legal discourse.

The volume concludes with **book reviews** that further extend its intellectual horizon. Notably, **Namrata Basu's review of Anil K. Gupta's *Traditional Knowledge Systems and Sustainable Livelihoods*** critically engages with one of the most significant contemporary works on indigenous knowledge, grassroots innovation, ecological wisdom, and women's roles as knowledge holders. The review situates Gupta's work within broader debates on sustainability, policy, and cultural resilience, reinforcing the volume's central concern with the future relevance of traditional knowledge systems.

In its entirety, this volume embodies NSOU's scholarly vision: to generate socially committed, critically informed, and future-oriented academic discourse. By bringing together philosophy, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, cultural studies, education, media studies, gender studies, and legal analysis, this issue does more than document Indigenous Knowledge Systems—it reinstates indigeneity as a vital epistemic resource capable of informing sustainable futures, equitable governance, ethical community-making, and enriched cultural life. At a historical moment marked by ecological precarity, technological acceleration, and cultural fragmentation, the insights offered here acquire renewed urgency.

We hope that this issue stimulates deeper scholarly engagement while encouraging universities, policymakers, educators, and communities to recognize the indispensable value of indigenous epistemes. The *NSOU Journal of Social Sciences* remains committed to advancing such dialogues and fostering research that is intellectually rigorous, socially responsive, and profoundly transformative.

The Editors

NSOU Journal of Social Sciences
School of Social Sciences
Netaji Subhas Open University
Kolkata, December, 2025