Indigenous Consciousness Education Research Methods Convening
Anant National University and University of Pennsylvania GSE
(The Future of Learning Collaborative)
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CONVENING WHITE PAPER

Convening Location
Anant National University
Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

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Introduction

The ICERM Convening investigated how local communities understand their funds of knowledge and knowledge systems. The fireside chats, abstract presentations and workshops focused on integrating community-engaged and learner-centered methodologies that respect local educational traditions and contribute to sustainable educational practices globally.

Researchers submitted abstracts based on their work with "indigenous consciousness," defined as an anthropological/ethnographic method of examining local funds of knowledge. "Local funds of knowledge" or "local knowledge systems" is the knowledge generated by families and communities based on their lived experiences – their social/cultural/religious practices, systems, and histories. The ICERM focused on the Indian context, however, we intend for the concepts to be applicable globally through instantiation of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals as an interdisciplinary framework.

Focus Area

Researching indigenous consciousness is a multidisciplinary approach to a variety of sustainability domains in addition to maintaining cultural heritages. It "offers alternative and sustainable solutions to modern challenges, promotes social justice and empowerment for marginalized communities, enhances understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives, contributes to innovation and adaptation in various fields, supports biodiversity conservation efforts, enriches educational curricula and awareness programs, improves health outcomes through holistic approaches, fosters cultural exchange and dialogue, and ultimately leads to a more inclusive and diverse society." (Basumatary, B., Robin, K., Arvind, Verma, M.K. 2024, p. 149).

The goals of the Convening were to foster dialogue among international, interdisciplinary scholars, education practitioners and policy makers about epistemological research of local knowledge systems. "Knowledge and the power to define what counts as real knowledge lie at the epistemic core of colonialism." (Smith, pg. xii) and "...history is mostly about power. It is the story about the powerful and how they became powerful, and then used their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others." (Smith, pg. 37-38) It is therefore the responsibility of social justice educationists to intentionally decolonize education systems through understanding frameworks for centering local funds of knowledge. The Convening was one effort towards such an effort

Discussion

Indigenous consciousness is a research methodology that informs a belief system creating a "space for inquiries based on relational realities and forms of knowing that are predominant among the non-Western" communities (Chilisa, 2020, p. 2) The Convening hosted a dialogue among scholars to "seek forms of praxis and inquiry that are emancipatory and empowering" (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008, p. 2). This approach concurs with Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez (1989, p. 46) that "indigenous knowledge is a rich social resource for any justice related attempt to bring about social change" (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999, p.15).

Indigenous consciousness methods can be specific to locations, regions, and groups of people and are distinct from "conventional" epistemologies (Euro-Western research methodologies) "in their absence of colonial and imperial power" (Chilisa, 2020, p. 90). The primary goal and purpose of the Convening was to engage scholars, practitioners, policy-makers and students in sharing and discussing interdisciplinary scholarship that centers "indigenous consciousness" research as defined here. The intent of the Convening is to inform our understanding of local funds of knowledge and how that understanding can guide effective implementation of education systems and policy.

This paper reflects the diverse and impactful ways in which Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are being integrated into education through grassroots initiatives, innovative pedagogy, and community driven models. The themes for the Convening were:

1. What philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks are useful, and necessary for embracing Indigenous Consciousness and challenging the colonial roots of education research?
2. Which research approaches and methodologies effectively counter the epistemic dominance of Western frameworks and honor Indigenous ways of knowing? How can these approaches address the politics of representation and resist the perpetuation of colonial power?
3. What methods of data collection and analysis prioritize Indigenous knowledge, cultural systems and relational ethics, and how can they be employed to better understand local educational knowledge systems and funds of knowledge?
4. What are key challenges in designing and conducting research through an Indigenous consciousness lens, particularly in navigating the legacies of colonization in academic practices and institutions?
5. What are some case study exemplars or models that demonstrate respectful application of Indigenous consciousness methodologies in educational research?

The planning team disseminated a Call for Papers through personal and informal professional networks, and listservs with the goal of soliciting proposals from a diverse array of international scholars and experts in research methodology.

Convening Planning Committee

Penn GSE was represented at the Convening by Leland S. McGee, J.D., M.S.Ed., Ed.D., and research partner Vani Kumari on behalf of The Future of Learning Collaborative.

Anant National University team was represented by Anunaya Chaubey, Ph.D., Diti Vyas, Ph.D., and Puneet Kumar, (Pursuing Ph.D).

Convening Highlights

Opening Remarks Summary

Dr. Sanjeev Vidyarthi, Provost, shared his intent for this event to bring together people from different but related fields to explore Indigenous ways of learning, with a focus on how teaching happens. It highlighted how traditional knowledge systems are deeply rooted in communities, where learning takes place through storytelling, observation, and participation. Gandhi's use of the spinning wheel and public rallies shows how learning and communication can be part of everyday life.

A key part of the discussion is about the pedagogy of design and the design of pedagogy—how teaching is done and how it can be designed better. The aim is to find ways to improve classroom teaching by combining traditional methods with new ideas for communication and learning.

Indigenous consciousness is not just about tribal communities, it includes everyone connected to their local culture and environment. It calls for an education system that is learner-centred and inclusive. **Dr. McGee** highlighted the need to "unlearn" dominant worldviews and rethink our positionality. He also explained how ethnographic and participatory methods can help communities become active contributors in shaping education systems and policy.

Dr. Vyas upheld provisions in NEP 2020 to celebrate the indigenous by undoing of hegemony of colonial and repressive educational frameworks. She highlighted the rigorous consultative process that went into formulating the draft policy of NEP 2020 and underlined the significance of bringing in various stakeholders in conversation and participation for the effective implementation of the policy.

Abstract Presentations

There were twenty Abstracts submitted for consideration. Fourteen Abstracts were accepted and presented. Summaries of their presentations follow:

I. **Innovations and Heritage in Design and Education: Integrating Culture, Environment, and Technology**

Darpil Shah believes that learning design should go beyond theory; that it must be experienced through hands-on work. He combines physical modeling and digital tools to teach parametric brick bonding, letting students work with real materials like clay and MDF, while also learning generative design through software. His constructivist approach (an approach that helps us to innovate different bonds and experiment on different materials) allows students to explore, make decisions, and understand design logic practically. This method helped them gain precision in making bricks and understand complex systems better through doing, not just knowing.

Ankur Jyoti Dutta showed how urban parks in Delhi can become outdoor classrooms and support the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). He believes that being in nature and learning through it brings about change, but the question that arises is: what kind of change? He explained that IKS is collective, evolving knowledge built over time. He studied different parks like Lodhi Garden, Sunder Nursery, and Jahapanah City Forest. Each location showed how people learn from nature, memory, and everyday use. He studied how communities interact with nature, did a 6-month study on a plant with his students, observing seasonal changes like leaf fall and root growth. His work shows that parks can teach us, just like classrooms, and they can shape how we think and learn about architecture through nature and tradition.

Puneet Kumar's work focuses on the oral Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) that live in folk songs, stories, and traditions - especially around water bodies and deities like Sanjhi Mata. He uses *Lok Manyata*, *Lok Geet*, and *Lok Vidya* to describe oral traditions, which are still alive and practiced as living traditions. *Lok Geet* reflects cultural heritage, *Lok Vidya* refers to knowledge about natural resources, and *Lok Manyata* represents beliefs that are accepted and lived by people. He also suggests that there is no clear difference between oral history and oral tradition. His recordings of Lok Geet (folk songs) from regions like Delhi, Haryana, and Rajasthan reflect how people connect to space, culture, and memory. Through Lok Vidya (people's knowledge) passed down by elders, we understand everyday life, health, beliefs, and rituals. He reminds us that these traditions are not fixed - they evolve with people and time. Oral history and oral traditions are deeply connected, and his goal is to bind literacy with tradition, using tools like voice and video recordings to preserve and celebrate Indigenous knowledge.

Maharshi Thula, encourages a critical lens towards the use of AI in architecture. He is not against technology but asks us to reflect: Can AI really understand the depth of Indigenous culture and spaces? Can it respect and include local knowledge, values, and traditions? He believes that AI can support creativity through virtual reality (VR), artificial reality (AR), and real-time rendering. However, it should be used with awareness, not as a replacement for architects. He suggests that government and private sectors must collaborate to apply AI responsibly, insisting that human values and cultural context should guide the design process. His work pushes us to think about the future of design education and practice, where AI becomes a tool for support, not dominance.

Together, all three perspectives explored different ways of preserving and evolving Indigenous knowledge - through experience-based learning, oral traditions, critical technology use, and use of parks as classrooms that teach us through nature and memory. Each seeks to shape an architecture that is rooted, relevant, and responsive to the present and future.

II. Reframing Indigenous Knowledge: Pedagogies, Sustainability, and Contemporary Spaces

Pawan Raj, discussed the traditional games of Radhava people in the state of Gujarat. In order to better understand these games and their narratives, he spent time in their village. He noted the character of these games and how much importance is attached to them by the Radhava community. These traditional games are not just a part of culture but also a tradition that assists in retaining values, heritage, and identity. He explained how Western influence and digital technology have caused these games to disappear, saying they matter for more than just keeping traditions alive. Such games also help develop empathy, hand-eye coordination, and mental acuity. He ended by proposing that incorporating such games in academic courses and co-designing them with kids might improve learning efficiency.

Nirved Kumar and Eshita Dubey followed with a discussion of Indigenous knowledge systems. They talked about the decolonization hurdles within current education systems and

commented that earlier systems were regarded as superior. The presenters acknowledged the profound influence that colonization had on knowledge and systems, and that pre-colonial hierarchies were not without fault; they should not be romanticized as "better." The presenters concluded that "fixing" the country's education system does not depend on a single solution for all communities. Rather, it hinges on individuals being receptive, flexible, and thoughtfully involved with the local knowledge systems and how those systems benefit the communities that the systems serve.

Praveen Kumar Shetty conducts research in Tulunadu, a richly cultured coastal area of Karnataka where traditions are still alive as when the early inhabitants settled there. He showed how real-world application and study can work together through the academic courses that he and his team developed. He immersed himself and students among the Tulunadu people to learn of their culture, origins and traditions. The courses are taught by community members themselves, so students can learn about the culture first-hand. Once students have finished studying the course, they are eligible to participate in a further immersive program where they live in Tulunadu to experience the culture as part of the Manipal Academy of Higher Education's program. Such a course is an example of non-extractive research as well as academic incorporation.

At the end of the day, architect **Neha Nair** talked about what spaces traditional craftspeople need in order to be successful. When designing work spaces, considerations such as weather, available materials, comfort, and creative needs of each craftsperson. In addition, each community presents different conditions that impact artisans' ability to perform their craft. Resistance to change and lack of clarity about the future market for the traditional artifacts threatens the continued sharing of the skills. It therefore is important to attend to the community in which local artisans live. It is integral to the perpetuation of the craft's ecosystem; how will the skills of the craft survive.

By the end, we saw how these speakers didn't just learn about communities - they found real ways to help them. This made traditional crafts easier to access and helped keep them alive.

III. Indigenous Perspectives in Education, Culture, and Knowledge Systems

Jay Thakkar's work focused on co-creation and preserving local knowledge through interactive and culturally rooted design. His team creates toolkits and thematic cards, collaborating closely with artisans and local figures like pujaris to document and learn traditional narratives. They engage in hands-on work with craftspeople to understand local materials and processes, which they consider essential for authentic learning and documentation. These insights are transformed into visual languages and storylines for board games. So far, they've developed 19 games inspired by people from Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, including one based on a local market in Himachal. They also create high fidelity prototypes to test the feel and material of the games. Exhibitions are held to showcase their work. Mr. Thakkar emphasizes that these games allow people, especially those outside India, to reconnect with cultural roots.

Snehasri and Vidisha Patil focused on natural farming practices in Dang and Navsari districts, advocating for organic, community-based agriculture rooted in women's traditional knowledge. They emphasized that practices like the Wadi system and the use of local seeds such as kansari and nagli are sustainable and deeply connected to local ecosystems.

Brahma Gosh Raval and Janardhan Ghosh discussed the Gurukul education pedagogy, highlighting the importance of personal attention, character development, oral storytelling, and embodied learning. They emphasized that the relationship between guru and shishya is transformational, with knowledge being transmitted through presence, experience, and rasa - the emotional essence of learning.

Megha Jain, through her research, explored how IKS can be methodically integrated into the Modern Education System (MES) by focusing on ethical learning, relational development, and inclusive, diverse learning environments. She used qualitative research tools like focus groups and semi structured interviews to understand the relational impact of IKS on educational growth.

In Nava Nadisar, Gopalbhai and Rakeshbhai have created a unique child-led governance model, where students take responsibility for managing school activities such as reviewing lesson plans, writing official letters, and solving school and village problems. Rooted in the NEP 2020 framework, this model has transformed the school into a hub of civic engagement and experiential learning, attracting over 450 students from surrounding villages.

On the innovation front**, Prakash Chandra Suthar** tackled the issue of limited science resources in government schools by developing over 100 low-cost and no-cost science tools using everyday materials. He painted science concepts on school walls and personally trained teachers, making science education simple, affordable, and hands-on. Raghav Katakiya introduced the "One-Minute Game" model post-COVID to rebuild foundational skills and increase student attendance, especially in Grades 1 and 2. His initiative included games that developed memory, concentration, math skills, physical strength, and shared it widely via his YouTube channel Raghav nu Kamakdu. Jinesha Ben created over 300 educational games and introduced skill-based vocational learning and entrepreneurship through initiatives like Ram Haath, a student-run market that teaches financial literacy and self-reliance. She also conducted a 470-day online camp during the pandemic to continue learning with the involvement of students and parents.

Finally, **Birbal Rathod's Lalitam** Seed Bank, created after a personal loss, now conserves and distributes over 450 varieties of native seeds, including endangered and medicinal plants. His initiative has raised environmental awareness among school children and communities and is supported by institutions like the Gujarat Forest Department. These diverse case studies show that by grounding education in India's traditional wisdom, cultural practices, and community strengths, we can create inclusive, experiential, and sustainable learning environments that resonate with both modern needs and ancestral values.

Fireside Chat Discussions

There were two Fireside Chat discussions with a total of six panelists. See Appendix E for the Panelists list and their biographies. Learning comes alive when education is rooted in culture, community, and curiosity. Across regions, educators, artisans, farmers, and changemakers are weaving Indian Knowledge Systems into modern education, proving that tradition is not the opposite of innovation, it's the foundation of it.

I. Rooted Futures: Reimagining Education Policy through Indigenous Consciousness

Kathan Shukla highlighted the need for a systemic redesign of the current education systems, which are too focused on repetitive drills and exams, and are mostly controlled by the state in the Indian government [In India the government schools are not regarded as highly as the privately run K-12 schools]. He shared examples of innovations such as of a teacher who created “Preeti’s portable library" and the villagers of Barefoot College in Tilonia who demonstrate that change doesn’t always require a large amount of resources, just real community engagement.

Sushant Bharti explained how **s**paces and traditions can be preserved when the community is engaged in the education process. He referred to Vasudev Sharan Agrawala, who showed how language and cultural memory reveal how the Indian society worked in the past. Indigenous knowledge continues through generational transmission, deeply connected to place and language.

The discussants suggested that today's education systems often create cultural alienation, making people feel ashamed of their traditions. **Pawan Gupta** suggested that a cultural shift is needed; one that values Indigenous knowledge and encourages open, bias-aware, and participatory research. Such research should not extract knowledge in a selfish way but build trust and mutual learning.

Lastly, conserving nature is key to protecting Indigenous knowledge, which is based on a balanced relationship with the land. **Jyothika Ramaprasad** explained the “myth of the non-situated ego” which reflects western societies’ belief that knowledge is unbiased and objective hence thinking it can be applied universally. This leads to the assumption that western thought should predominate learning and research. However, knowledge is always shaped by culture and context. To truly respect Indigenous consciousness, we must decolonize our thinking, become our own historians, and work towards an education system that “listens deeply, acts justly, and honours all.”

II. Unlearning Empire: Decolonizing Education Research

Vinita Siddhartha emphasized the cultural and emotional significance of traditional games, explaining how they foster cognitive, social, and physical development. She highlighted the importance of unstructured play, where learning doesn’t always require a defined outcome, and children are allowed to lose, explore, and reflect - making games a holistic and effective tool for learning. **Jay Thakkar** expanded on this idea by sharing how he designs board games based on

regional stories and traditional crafts to make complex academic concepts like Pascal's Triangle, binary numbers, and musical notations engaging for both children and adults. His design process blends storytelling, local wisdom, and play to stimulate curiosity and experiential learning.

Rajendra Singh, renowned as the "Waterman of India," shared his life's work in river rejuvenation and community revival. By reconnecting with nature and local knowledge, he has revived 23 rivers and helped over 6,000 people return to farming, reversing migration patterns. He emphasized that children possess pure creativity and that nature, when loved and observed, becomes the greatest teacher.

Dineshbhai addressed linguistic barriers in Chhota Udepur by developing learning materials in the local Rathvi dialect, including books, flashcards, and culturally relevant stories. His initiative, supported by DIET Vadodara and Bhasha Research Centre, enabled multilingual learning and received state-wide recognition.

Jay Thakkar offered an educational approach focused on making learning engaging, hands-on, and rooted in cultural heritage. He uses simple tools like straws and educational toys to teach scientific and historical concepts in playful, intuitive ways. Drawing from ancient Indian knowledge systems such as Pingala and Mount Meru, he connects traditional wisdom with modern education. He emphasizes the importance of oral traditions and believes learning should be interactive and meaningful by creating games. Aware of how children and adults perceive learning differently, he tailors his methods for young minds. His goal is to show how history and culture can enrich middle school education.

Workshops

There were three workshops by practitioners who shared experiences from different cultures that reflect their live experiences. **The Magic of Paper** - an Origami workshop, on the Japanese art of paper folding. The goal of this art is to transform a flat sheet of material into a finished sculpture through folding and sculpting techniques. It helps individuals to be creative and innovative. In modern usage, the word "Origami" is used as an inclusive term for all folding practices, regardless of their culture of origin. The practice became deeply embedded in the respective cultures and evolved into distinct traditions.

Resource Persons: Mr. Narendra Panya, trainer and author, Ms. Atsuko Yamamoto, Japanese Language and Culture Faculty AMA and Ms. Shizu Hashimoto, Laxman Gyanpith School.

Reimagining Play: A Living Archive of Indigenous Games by Rathava Children - This hands-on, child-led workshop brought together 12 Rathava Adivasi children from Vasant Shala, a unique residential school run by the Bhasha Tribal Academy. The children animated the field of research with the rhythm of real play. Participants engaged with, experienced and reflected upon indigenous games that have been passed down through generations within the Rathava

community of Gujarat. These games are not merely recreational; they encode values of cooperation, strategy, endurance, ecological awareness and cultural continuity. As the world engages in conversations about sustainability and equity, indigenous knowledge systems offer timeless lessons in resilience, creativity and community. This workshop honored those voices and places children not merely as subjects of research but as co-creators and carriers of culture.

Resource Persons: Pawan Raj, Anant Fellowship in collaboration with the children of Vasant Shala, Bhasha Tribal Academy, Tejgadh, Gujarat

Kreeda Games - Kreeda is an organisation in the southeast coast city of Nandanam, Chennai, India and has been researching, developing and reviving traditional games of India. More than that, they intend to share the spirit of Indian culture through the spirit in which the games were played. Twenty-one of the games were displayed and demonstrated during the Convening. The Founder, Vinita Sidhartha stated in her book, *Just Play*, "[w]hen I started researching these games, they were mere games to me. But the more I read about them and played them, the more I realized that there were many messages and lessons hidden within them."

Resource Person: Vanita Sidhartha, Founder, Kreeda Games

Designing Anti-Games Workshop - Interactive Media for Consciousness Preservation for meaningful educational experiences. We practice at the intersection of post colonial writing and interactive fiction, and we use videogame spaces as sites of discourse, resistance and record. With our games we attempt to study colonial power structures and the histories that they occlude and how interactive fiction might be used to pollute a single reductive record of the past or of a people. We are keenly interested in languages, translations and questions of authorship, of bodies and territories, and of transactions and movements across borders. But most of all we study stories or narratives or fragments of data that can be recorded in the form of hypertext.

Resource Person: Prof. Prayas Abhinav, Assistant Professor, Interaction Design and Dhruv Jani, founder of Oleomingus games and arts practice studio. Studio Oleomingus is a small, independent game and arts studio, based in Chala, India.

Abstracts and Presenters

Indigenous Oral History as a Research methodology: Understanding the knowledge of local communities

Asst. Prof. Puneet Kumar – Anant University

Indigenous oral history is a qualitative research method, which includes documenting "personal stories, family stories, and community stories" which convey crucial details about the knowledge, culture and traditions of the indigenous communities (Wheeler et al. 2023). It is not simply about documenting verbal communication, it is understanding the evident trails in "arts, traditions, environments and genealogies" (Mahuika 2019).

The colonial epistemology de-legitimized the authenticity of the oral narratives of the indigenous communities and marginalized their knowledge systems, often tagging them as unscientific, mystical and barbaric. The modern knowledge systems primarily established writing and reading are knowledge in itself rather than skills to acquire knowledge, this down-graded the oral transmission of knowledge. Literacy, knowledge of letters, came to be understood as the 'only' form of knowledge, far stretched from its actual etymology. This enables dominant modern languages for what Louis- Jean Calvet calls 'glottophagy', i.e. replacement of minor languages by a dominant language (Hountondji 1997). This led to a pathway to global intellectual imperialism, when the categories of modern science became universal parameters of distinguishing 'science' and 'non-science.

Oral History is better suited to understand the social and historical construction of a community, relying on collective memories, backed by the mnemonic devices, with multiple stakeholders unlike writing which became a political tool for power. Oral history thus provides us to know people's history, lives of the ordinary, providing an alternative to conventional history, empowering the narratives of self determination of traditional communities (Mukhopadhyay 2019). As Paulo Friere, pointed out that it leads to "conscientization", which is developing critical consciousness of social reality and leading to a movement for a political change. It is thus that it counter the western epistemic dominance and honour the indigenous ways of knowing, which makes it an appropriate research methodology to understand the indigenous knowledge of the local communities.

Pedagogical as well as Executional strategies for architecture against Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Asst. Prof. Ar. Maharishi Thula
School Of Architecture, Anant National University

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is quickly redefining the landscape of regular professional domains, and architecture is no exception. From generative design and parametric modeling to construction automation and urban analytics, AI technologies are changing how architects think, design, and build. While these changes offer efficiency and expanded capabilities to our significant profession, they also raise substantial concerns about the erosion of traditional design values, the marginalization of creative agency, and the commodification of placemaking.

This study examines the dual dimension of AI's impact on architecture – **Pedagogical objective in academic** as well as **executional acceptance in practice.** The pivotal goal is to express a balanced and critical approach that resists unreflective adoption while embracing AI's strengths to enhance architectural thinking and delivery.

On the pedagogical facade, the study explores how AI can be assimilated into architecture curricula without supplanting fundamental as well as essential humanistic design skills. This includes analyzing case studies of leading architectural institutions experimenting with AI-driven studios, developing modules that associate computational literacy with architectural history and theory, and exploring how critical thinking can be cultivated alongside machine-led methods. Key strategies proposed include hybrid studio models – specific amalgamation -, where AI is positioned as a co-designer rather than a solution provider or rather than being a central pivot, and syllabi that encourage students to question, interpret, and repurpose AI outputs rather than passively accept them. Active and focused participations are always important rather than .

In terms of executional strategies, the research evaluates how AI tools can improve the repetitive and complex tasks in design development and project execution. If the discussion is all about architecture, then complexity cannot be resolved only through automated machines. They have to be targeted through skills and experience that surely shall be served by human intervention. However, it strains that such optimization should not lead to the deskilling of architects or an over-dependence on algorithmic solutions as well as robotic interventions. Instead, AI should act as a support system for enhanced human judgment just like all other tools available and those were used till date. The research proposes approaches for assimilating AI into professional workflows that prioritize contextual intelligence, user experience, and local cultural narratives—facets often overlooked by AI systems trained on globalized data sets.

A consistent argument against professionalism by all mean. Of all time. - ***Can AI, with its pattern- recognition and data analysis capabilities, truly replicate of support the intuitive and empathetic dimensions of an architect's role?*** This question forms the philosophical backbone of the study and inform both pedagogical design and professional execution models. A central Inquiry is whether AI can expressively participate in the process of placemaking – creating environments that are socially and culturally rich – that respects the depth and shade of architectural intent.

Eventually the paper believes in an **AI-aware but human-driven architecture**, where the synergy between tradition and technology leads to innovation that is both efficient and ethically grounded. The proposed strategies act as a feasible roadmap for educators, practitioners, and students to engage with AI critically and creatively, ensuring that the discipline of architecture continues to evolve without losing its soul.

Research Questions -

What if the most monotonous of design details could promptly be resolved with the use of AI?

Will AI be able to shape up the place making experiences along with the building that an Architect actually can?

What is the feasibly justified level for acceptance and implementation of basic principles of AI into the Education and simultaneously in the practice of Architecture?

Core Objective:

Certainly this research aims to develop a specific framework of pedagogical and executional strategies to meaningfully engage Artificial Intelligence within architectural education and practice, without compromising the essential values of human-centric creativity, contextual design, and cultural continuity.

Reimagining Education through Nagaland's Cultural Wisdom

Rhea Shah, Jonathan F. Mendonca - Independent scholar

This paper examines a traditional educational phenomenon, called 'Morung', of the Nagaland communities in Northeast India, in order to understand defining features of educational practices rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems. Historically, Morungs have served as physical spaces of youth learning, community organization, and cultural transmission, and offered a unique educational model that has sustained social cohesion, ecological wisdom, and intergenerational knowledge exchange as the dominant form of education for centuries before the arrival of missionaries in the late 1800's. The Nagaland government sees value in traditional practices and has attempted to include Morung practices within the official state curriculum. The central question we aim to address is: *What are the key features of educational practices followed by Morungs, and how do they reflect a distinct Indigenous pedagogical and philosophical paradigm?* The paper further investigates how these practices compare and contrast with dominant Western educational theories, particularly experiential, project-based, and peer learning models.

This study draws on two forms of research 1) narrative inquiry, drawing on interviews with elders, cultural leaders, and individuals affiliated with Morungs, including community organizations working on cultural preservation and 2) secondary research dominantly referencing

scholarly work authored by Naga academics, to ensure an informed and respectful engagement with local epistemologies. Community-authored scholarship shall play a vital interpretive anchor for the narrative inquiry.

To frame the educational practices found in Morungs, the study explores pedagogical modes embodied in cultural-spiritual frameworks: encounter-based learning, apprenticeship and embodied experience, story work, land-based learning, and communal assessment of mastery. These practices are then compared in relation to their Western counterparts to explore *divergences in epistemology*. For instance, while experiential learning in the West often centers

individual development and self-reflection, Morung learning is embedded in *relationality, collective responsibility,* and *land-based identity formation*. This comparative lens underscores how Western pedagogical principles that are culturally contingent should not be universalized.

This paper uses Morung as a case study to contribute to the field of Indigenous Consciousness research by identifying *philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks* necessary for reimagining education beyond colonial logics and surfacing educational practices rooted in lived experience, place, and collective identity. It asserts that Indigenous education systems are active, living systems of thought and practice that can inform global educational discourse.

The urgency of this work lies in its capacity to intervene in current **social, political, and ecological contexts** where dominant education systems are increasingly inadequate at addressing the local impacts of global complexities such as climate change. The pace of cultural homogenization, the climate crisis, and eroding local identities, reclaiming Indigenous education models like the Morung offers pathways for more sustainable, just, and pluralistic futures.

Documenting Indigenous Games of Rathava Community Children

Pawan Raj – Anant University
Mentor: Dr Diti Pundrik Vyas

"Bachchon ke nanhe haathon ko chaand sitaare chhoone do
Chaar kitabein padh kar yeh bhi hum jaise ho jaayenge."

(Let the small hands of children reach for the moon and stars… for after reading a few books, they too will become like us)

~Nida Faazli

Documenting Indigenous Games of Rathava Community Children emerges from a simple yet profound question: *What do we lose when children stop playing their traditional games?* This research aims to document, understand and reflect on the indigenous games still practiced by children in the Rathava community in Tejgadh, Chhota Udepur district of Gujarat and to explore what these games reveal about learning, identity and cultural continuity.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the indigenous games currently played by Rathava community children?
- How do these games contribute to cultural knowledge, learning and social bonding?
- What factors are influencing the continuity or decline of these traditional games?

- How can this documentation contribute to indigenous knowledge preservation and education frameworks?

Data was collected primarily through oral narratives and firsthand experiences shared by Rathava children, using field observations and a chain sampling method. Over 50 in-depth interviews were conducted with children aged 7 to 14. These interactions were designed as informal, playful conversations that allowed children to speak in their own words and physically demonstrate the games. The process included audio-visual recordings, video interviews and active participation in gameplay sessions.

Existing literature shows a clear gap. While indigenous games have been examined globally at a broad level, there is limited micro-level, community-specific documentation, particularly among tribal children in India. Most studies focus on indigenous knowledge in education, folklore, or rituals, often sidelining play. This thesis challenges that absence by treating everyday games as a vital site of cultural production and transmission.

A thematic analysis was used to categorise the games based on dimensions such as physical and cognitive development, gender roles, seasonal rituals, intergenerational transmission and community cohesion. The research goes beyond description to interpret how these games express deeper cultural values, ecological understanding and social learning.

The contribution of this work lies in three areas. First, it preserves knowledge that is at risk of fading due to modernisation, digital influences and the erosion of communal spaces. Second, it invites dialogue on incorporating indigenous games into educational settings, offering inclusive and culturally grounded learning tools. Third, it contributes to Indigenous Consciousness studies by positioning children as active creators and carriers of cultural knowledge.

This thesis advocates for policies that recognise indigenous games as living heritage. It also aims to serve as a resource for educators, researchers and community members seeking child-centered models of cultural preservation. At its core, the work is a tribute to the creativity, resilience, and wisdom embedded in children's play: a domain often overlooked, yet deeply significant.

Beyond Binary Resistance: Philosophical Foundations for Plural and Adaptive Indigenous Knowledge Systems

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Colonisation is not merely a historical phenomenon but an ongoing geopolitical, economic, and epistemic domination system. As Maldonado-Torres (2016) argue, coloniality persists-particularly in formerly colonised nations as neocolonialism (Siltaoja et al., 2019) - by

invalidating traditional knowledge and practices. This dominance of 'epistemic coloniality' (Mbembe, 2016) - a systemic suppression of non-Western knowledge systems results in 'epistemic violence' (Mignolo, 2002). Local knowledge systems are rendered illegitimate, subordinate, and contextual in privileging Western knowledge as "universal, purely rational and thus liberatory" (Hughson, 2022, p. 5).

In India, this has led to the marginalisation and alienation of indigenous educational institutions like gurukuls and madrasas, the downgrading of local languages and dialects, and the valorisation of English and Western pedagogical models (Jabin et al., 2022; Mignolo, 2000). This domination further manifests through standardisation, accreditation, and encouragement of institutional isomorphism wherein institutions are required to conform to global benchmarks, such as QS Rankings and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), thereby enacting what Hughson (2022) terms "cultural homogenisation." Such mimicry creates ambivalence and an ethical dilemma between the Western and local ways of knowing" (Kothiyal & Bell, 2018).

In the geopolitics of knowledge, thus decolonisation becomes both a political imperative and an epistemic consequence. It is a social movement to recover and rearticulate institutional change and thought that have been eroded or silenced. Smith (2012) practices decolonisation as a methodological imperative that actively includes and elevates Indigenous voices, narratives, and frameworks.

While the urgency to decolonise is widely acknowledged, the process is fraught with challenges. Most scholarship has focused on the *external challenge*: the hegemonic dominance of Western knowledge systems and the struggle for indigenous voices to be legitimate. This external struggle creates an inherent tension to either conform to or strategically resist dominant norms to gain recognition. As a result, scholars often face a double bind: in seeking academic legitimacy, they risk reinforcing the hierarchies they aim to dismantle.

Countries and communities face an *internal contention* in defining what constitutes 'Indigenous knowledge' and the polarisation within Indigenous communities themselves. Decolonisation is often misinterpreted as a simple reversal of colonial influence. In India, for instance, in social sciences, the Brahmanical elite act as epistemic gatekeepers by creating a divide between lower castes (such as Dalits and OBCs) as empirics and upper caste as theorists who have reflexive capacities (Guru, 2002). This internal contradiction risks decolonisation being co-opted for nationalist, majoritarian, or exclusionary purposes, as seen in certain articulations of Hindu ethnonationalism masquerading as decolonialism (Gopal, 2021). Given these complexities, it becomes essential to revisit philosophical frameworks to understand the nature of decolonisation.

This study engages with the inherent tension and often overlooked challenge in decolonisation over what counts as ‘Indigenous knowledge.’ We do this by turning to the scholarship of *Sri*

*Aurobind*o and *Mahatma Gandhi*, whose philosophies offer deep insight into anti-colonial knowledge and practice.

As Marwah (2024) interpreted, Aurobindo's political and spiritual philosophy is rooted in anti-colonialism, not in a binary rejection of the West but in the constructive affirmation of India's civilisational trajectory. His use of "reform Darwinism" was not to naturalise hierarchy but to suggest that Indian society evolves through internal assimilation and spiritual synthesis, not mere imitation (Marwah, 2024). *"[W]e must not take [democracy] crudely in the European forms, but must go back to whatever corresponds to it… in our spiritual conception of life and existence… a living organism which grows not by accretion, but by self-development and assimilation." (Aurobindo in Marwah, 2024, p. 876).*

Gandhi, similarly, viewed indigenous knowledge as inseparable from ethics, community, and self-rule (swaraj). His *Nai Talim,* or basic education, embodied experiential learning, local relevance, and moral development. Unlike technocratic Western education, Gandhian education focused on integration between knowing (head), doing (hand), and being (heart), making it fundamentally plural and place-based. This aligns with Gupta's (2010) argument that Indigenous knowledge is not rigid or insular but flexible, eclectic, and porous. It lends, borrows, transforms, and is rooted in ways of knowing, feeling, and doing, which makes it resilient. This vision also aligns with Aurobindo's evolutionary pluralism. Both thinkers argue that the strength of indigenous knowledge lies not in resistance alone but in its adaptive creativity.

Thus, the decolonial project cannot rely on the objective of a 'pure pre-colonial realm,' for, as Nigam (2020) cautions, "no territory has ever been hermetically isolated." Instead, decolonisation must embrace hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), pluriversality (Mbembe, 2016), and the ecology of knowledge (Santos, 2014); frameworks that resist epistemic totality. To decolonise, then, is not simply to recover the past but to critically inhabit the present with a vision toward an inclusive, equitable epistemic future. It is about reclaiming the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge systems, not just as alternatives to the West but as systems with their internal coherence, methodologies, and worldviews (Smith, 2012)- this shift from resistance to reconstruction is particularly crucial in fields like education and research. Therefore, scholars and institutions must remain reflexive and aware that their positionalities and methods are implicated in the systems they seek to transform (Stein, 2021; Hughson, 2022).

By considering both challenges together and grounding in philosophical frameworks, we conclude that developing an indigenous consciousness would primarily mean rejecting domination while reclaiming the 'flow' or dynamic transmission of knowledge where we can accept, assimilate, adapt, transform and reject as needed. Knowledge is not static but dynamic, capable of absorbing, rejecting, and transforming external influences to reconstitute them based on indigenous worldviews.

Indigenous Knowledge and Modern Education for Sustainable Future – a University Initiative

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"When water becomes rotten and air turns poisonous, it is a sign you have defiled and defied your deities," observes Dr. Indira Hegde, a folk historian from Karnataka, in her article on Kandevu aayana, a celebration representing the idea of a worship tradition called Bhutaradhane in Tulunadu. Tulunadu, a region along the South-Western coast of India comprising Udupi and Dakshina Kannada Districts in Karnataka and Kasaragod district in Kerala, is an agrarian society with deep-rooted customs, and has long thrived on a harmonious relationship with nature and community. Dr. Hegde's reflection highlights the significance of indigenous knowledge systems that are embedded within local traditions, practices, and beliefs.
The worship of animistic spirits and land as deities in Tulunadu manifested in the form of Bhuta worship or Kambala is not merely a series of ritualistic acts; it is a repository of knowledge about living in harmony with nature and preserving human dignity. The myths, often preserved through oral traditions, are rich in themes of justice, sustainability, and coexistence. Yet, despite their wisdom, these traditions rarely find a place in modern academic curricula. They are often dismissed as too primitive to hold intellectual value. However, in an increasingly anthropocentric and technologically driven world, there is a pressing need to re-examine these indigenous ideas, and the knowledge embedded in these systems, especially in the academic space.

Though there have been a number of books published both in regional language (Kannada) and in English on the folk traditions of Tulunadu, the efforts to disseminate the essence of these traditions in the academic space have been inadequate. The project 'Living Cultures and Traditions of Tulunadu' undertaken at Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Manipal, aims to document the distinctive folk traditions of the region using digital tools and create an archive of the knowledge system on the living cultures of Tulunadu.

Centre for Intercultural Studies and Dialogue (CISD) at Manipal through its project 'Discerning India: Living Cultures of Tulunadu' is making an earnest effort to disseminate the wisdom inherent in these community traditions among the student community and local population by creating an academic space for this. The Centre envisioned a two-pronged approach to bring the indigenous knowledge system with the academic ambit: curating an online self-paced certificate course and organizing interactive documentary sessions in local educational institutions. The online certificate course Discerning India: Living Cultures of Tulunadu is a two-credit, self-paced course that offers participants an in-depth look at the distinctive cultural traits of Tulunadu. The documentaries produced serve as a resource for both education and cultural preservation. CISD has actively brought these films to local educational institutions with screenings held at various undergraduate colleges in Udupi, followed by post-screening discussions that engage students and faculty in exploring the relevance of Tulunadu's cultural traditions.

Thus, by bridging academic frameworks with indigenous practices, the project outlined by CISD Discerning India: Living Cultures of Tulunadu offers a tangible step toward integrating local knowledge systems into mainstream education. These initiatives demonstrate that local knowledge does offer an invaluable perspective, and as Dr. Indira Hegde suggests, it may hold the key to keeping ‘our water clean and our air pure.

Housing the Indigenous Today: An inquiry into the spatial construct required for indigenous crafts and their appropriation for the 21st century

Neha Nair
Anant National University

India is a country of abundance, and one of its enduring legacies is its rich indigenous craft systems, preserved and practiced across centuries. The value of these knowledge systems extends beyond the availability of local materials, skilled labour, need-based responses, and cultural narratives. A critical but often overlooked dimension is the spatial organisation, settlement patterns, and collective or individual spaces that have historically shaped and sustained these craft communities. The physical dynamics of where and how these crafts were practiced reveal insights into the relationship between space and making. Folklores, oral traditions, and stories serve as essential lenses to decode these spatial constructs.

The purpose of this study is to examine the spatial nature of the living and working environments of indigenous craft communities. This inquiry goes beyond documenting the physical form of craft-based settlements. It investigates how these environments articulate the size and scale of the community, the sequence of craft production, gender roles, and the broader social structure. Through this academic endeavour, the research opens up speculative design possibilities for contemporary architectural spaces that aim to support and revive indigenous craft systems.

The study is guided by the following questions:
- How have the spatial constructs of indigenous craft communities historically supported production, social structure, and cultural continuity?
- In what ways can oral traditions, folk narratives, and material practices be used to decode architectural language and design methodologies?
- What was the relationship and use of the craft in defining the spatial character?
- How can contemporary architectural pedagogy integrate indigenous ways of knowing to create spatial conditions that both preserve and adapt craft systems for the 21st century?

The research draws from a triangulated data set that includes oral histories, archival texts, ethnographic observations, and fieldwork conducted in craft-intensive regions of India. It also engages with architectural studio-based pedagogical experiments that have explored

occupation-based community housing. These studio projects demonstrate how close readings of craft processes—through literature, material study, and documentation—enable a translation of knowledge into space. The process of decoding the craft into its various stages and associating each phase with a corresponding spatial need becomes central to this research. Tools such as spatial mapping, sequencing, and sectional studies allow for deeper architectural interpretations.

The paper attempts design processes to situate indigenous knowledge at the core of spatial thinking and develop pedagogical design approaches that integrate indigenous consciousness into academic practices. By foregrounding the interdependence between habitation and craft, the research repositions architecture as a medium of cultural continuity and resilience.

In doing so, it contributes to indigenous consciousness research by honouring traditional knowledge systems, proposing adaptive spatial futures, allowing architectural interventions to participate in keeping the Indian craft knowledge and practice alive and relevant.

Title: Reimagining the Vernacular: A Pedagogical Inquiry into Indigenous Knowledge Through Game Design

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Project Lead – Threads of Innovation

This research explores how traditional Indian crafts and cultural practices can be represented and reimagined through games. The goal is to create playful, interactive educational experiences that help children and youth engage with Indigenous knowledge systems, local traditions, and regional stories. By integrating crafts into board games, the project revives fading cultural practices and encourages a deeper, more experiential way of learning.

The study addresses the following guiding questions:

1. How can game design become a meaningful way to represent and preserve traditional crafts and cultural narratives?

2. What methods allow for ethical and collaborative engagement with craftspeople and local communities in educational design processes?

3. How can Indigenous knowledge systems be integrated into educational settings through creative, play-based methods?

Sources of Data, Prior Work, and Research Methods:

The study is rooted in the "Threads of Innovation" initiative—a four-year collaborative research project between CEPT University (India) and NTNU (Norway). It involved ethnographic fieldwork, community immersion, and iterative design thinking processes. Data was collected through interviews, workshops, storytelling sessions, and collaborative activities with craftspeople in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. Students engaged in field-based studios created narrative maps, tested prototypes, and documented Indigenous processes.

Methods used include:

- Community-based participatory research (CBPR)
- Design-led ethnographic inquiry
- Iterative prototyping and game testing

Expected Contribution and Significance:

Over 20 board games were developed based on Indian crafts like Ajrakh block printing, Bandhani, Tangaliya weaving, wool spinning, and Kath-Khuni architecture. Each game embedded local cultural knowledge, artisan practices, and storytelling into engaging rule-based formats. Examples include *Ajrakhpur* (resilience post-earthquake), *Yarn ni Yatra* (wool craft journey), and *Riyad* (sacred Himachali architecture).

This work contributes to Indigenous Consciousness research by demonstrating how play-based design can be a powerful pedagogical tool. It validates Indigenous practices as educational knowledge systems and creates immersive and intergenerational public outcomes.

Advancing the Guiding Question

Which research approaches and methodologies effectively counter the epistemic dominance of Western frameworks and honour Indigenous ways of knowing?

Reimagining the Vernacular, a studio within the *Threads of Innovation* project, uses a practice-based, community-led model of knowledge production that centres on Indigenous

perspectives from the outset. Rather than extractive academic research, it engages craftspeople as co-creators and acknowledges material-based and oral traditions as valid epistemologies.

The project prioritizes:

- Embodied learning through making and storytelling
- Design ethnography rooted in context
- Co-design with local communities
- Game development as a form of research

It validates alternative ontologies by positioning traditional craft as not just a subject but a method. Games became platforms for children to experience Indigenous ideas of time, space, value, and beauty. Dissemination through exhibitions, museums, and educational networks reinforces the value of these traditions within broader learning frameworks.

The Gurukul Advantage: Reframing Brand Equity through Indigenous Consciousness in Indian Knowledge Institutions

Dr. Brahma Ghosh Raval - Independent Researcher

The main goal of this research study is to critically examine the perspective of IKS and the influence of Indigenous Consciousness on modern branding techniques within the Indian education sector. The study examines the influence of cultural identity and Indian Vedic knowledge on marketing narratives and consumer engagement. The focus is on how to authentically incorporate Indigenous Consciousness into brand narrative from the lens of IKS. The research is a response to the impact of Indigenous cultural frameworks on brand equity and consumer loyalty and the limitations and opportunities arising from integrating corporate branding tactics with Indigenous epistemologies.

The study follows a mixed-methods approach, using qualitative ethnographic data from Indigenous communities, semi-structured interviews with brand strategists active in culture branding, and a systematic evaluation of existing literature in Indigenous studies. Prior studies suggest a scarcity of scholarship on Indigenous epistemologies in branding, which frequently marginalizes Indigenous perspectives or appropriates traditional symbols without context or authorization. This study seeks to fill this void by emphasizing Indigenous viewpoints in brand creation and consumer contact.

This study seeks to acquire a more nuanced insight into how Indigenous Consciousness enhances brand authenticity and creates stronger psychological connections with consumers, particularly in economies that value ethical and culturally conscious branding. By incorporating Indigenous research methodologies into branding theory, this study provides fresh frameworks for reconciling Indigenous perspectives with contemporary marketing ideologies. The study also aims to make methodological contributions by suggesting decolonizing research techniques that respect Indigenous sovereignty and knowledge systems. From a branding perspective, this study underscores the strategic significance of embedding Indigenous narratives into brand identification, which can increase brand distinctiveness and build consumer trust.

Despite this possibility, the literature has significant gaps, including a lack of empirical evidence on the impact of Indigenous-informed branding on consumer behavior, insufficient guidelines for ethical brand collaborations with Indigenous communities, and an abundance of standardised frameworks for incorporating Indigenous values without commercialization. Addressing these gaps requires a collaborative, transparent, and compassionate approach that enables equitable participation of Indigenous stakeholders in branding processes. Indigenous epistemologies must be acknowledged not only as aesthetic aspects, but also as fundamental concepts shaping brand purpose and community effect.

Decolonizing Education: Integrating Indigenous Consciousness for an Inclusive and Equitable Future

Meghan Jain - Symbiosis International University

The Indigenous Consciousness in education is a broad framework and covers Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and pedagogies within the learning environment. It challenges the formal education structure and promotes a holistic, relational, and land-based understanding of knowledge. The Indigenous Consciousness school of thought focuses on experiential learning, storytelling, and relationship with society as a leading centre for education. It focuses on the following principles: respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and interconnectedness.

It aims to culminate and foster an inclusive and just curriculum that will enable the learners to comprehend diverse worldviews, cultures, and histories. This will create interconnectedness and the ability to survive and thrive in different circumstances. Through Indigenous Consciousness, it will be easier to decolonize the formal education system. This requires a lot of hard work and determination because educational institutions need to realize the importance of indigenous education, and they must be ready to create space for it, which will lead to shaping policies, curricula, and pedagogical practices. It will help the learners to reconnect with the place, community, and ethical responsibility while promoting environmental sustainability. Indigenous education offers a respectful, equitable, and inclusive education system for all learners, free from biases.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to integrate Indigenous Consciousness in the formal educational system to eliminate the traditional approach to the education system. The aim is to discover how the conventional education system can be replaced with Indigenous Consciousness to foster inclusivity, sustainability, and social justice. The study aims to address the following questions:

- How can Indigenous Consciousness be integrated into the formal education system to create an equitable, inclusive world for all?

- What are the barriers to implementing Indigenous Consciousness, and how can they be eliminated?
- How can Indigenous Consciousness change the education system and bring a change in the lives of learners? Sources of Data and Research Methods

The following sources of data are considered:

- **Primary data –** Primary data is collected from interviews and focus groups with students, educators, faculty, and community leaders who have studied or have experience in Indigenous Consciousness pedagogies.
- **Secondary data –** Secondary data is collected from academic literature, policy documents, case studies, research reports, etc.

Many scholars and authors have done exceptional research in this field, such as Smith's (2021) Decolonizing Methodologies, Kovach's (2009) Indigenous Methodologies, and Battiste's (2013) Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit. Indigenous scholars like Tuck & Yang (2012) and Simpson (2014) have contributed to Indigenous education and practices. Interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, and content analysis will be the primary methods. Thematic analysis will be used for qualitative data to identify and implement Indigenous pedagogies and their challenges.

Expected Contribution to Knowledge Creation and Its Significance

This study will significantly contribute to Indigenous Consciousness in education by providing a detailed, context-specific examination of how Indigenous ways of knowing can be meaningfully integrated into formal curricula. The study will examine the practical challenges and offer concrete solutions to overcoming barriers to Indigenous pedagogical education.

The study will contribute to the broader academic discourse on decolonizing research methodologies. It will focus on incorporating the indigenous perspective in content and research methods, fostering an ethical and reciprocal research approach that aligns with indigenous values of relationship-building, respect, and accountability. The significance of this research is that it focuses on making the formal education system more inclusive and culturally relevant. The study supports the implementation and broader shift towards Indigenous Consciousness and focuses on advocating for an equitable learning culture that will benefit all learners.

Translation as Analytical Methodology in Social Science:
The Classificatory Dissonance of Hybrid Indigeneity

Dr Ashima Sood, Associate Professor and Director,
Centre for Urbanism and Cultural Economics - Anant National University

Objectives and Guiding Questions

Translation is at the heart of the social research enterprise, whether across theoretical and empirical categories, across disciplinary vocabularies or local and expert epistemologies. Taking seriously the call to translation, this paper aims to explore "classificatory dissonance" to analyse indigeneity, such that "indeterminacy" becomes the key to unlocking critical and creative horizons for conceptual synthesis (Sanchez 2025). Drawing inspiration from Sanchez's (2025) notion of a "mixed race imagination", I further argue that a commitment to decolonial modes of analysis demands a recognition of the plurality and hybridity that flourishes within the "pure" category of the indigenous.

The research questions with which I engage are the following: Can indigeneity be conceived as separate from the plural inheritance that shapes postcolonial settings? How can a respect for conceptual blurring and the resulting dissonance allow us to move past the binary formulations of indigenous and non-indigenous to a recognition of hybridised models of indigeneity?

Sources of Data, Prior Work and Research Methods

My intervention is based on a three-year ethnographic exploration of an urban, Punjabi tradition of kirtan or devotional music in a working and lower middle-class South Delhi. Funded by the India Foundation for the Arts, this study aimed to document and uncover the social, cultural and economic context for the tradition's transmission through extensive visual documentation and interviews with practitioners. The study showed how both western, modern as well as traditional notions of "art" are troubled by the performative dialectic of kirtan, which joyfully embraces idioms, languages, lyrics and inspiration wherever it can find them, forging a playful, loving relationship with the deity and the congregation both.

Expected contribution to knowledge creation and the significance to Indigenous Consciousness research practices

Advancing Sanchez's idea of classificatory dissonance, this paper aims to complicate notions of indigeneity from a location within an indigenous tradition. I argue that indigenous studies must pay greater attention to the dynamism and hybridity of knowledge systems and practices. Knowledge systems rooted in the formerly colonized Global South have tended to be relegated to relativistic and particularistic epistemological status. Like "mixed race" identities, hybridized "emic" categories challenge us to locate the universalizing theoretical range of indigenous knowledge systems, in which "pure" forms emerge as special cases. What epistemological orders would allow for such a reversal and celebration of hybridity, not as another but a dialectical mode of indigeneity?

Embodiment, Orality, and the Rasa of Learning: *Revisiting the Performative* Dimensions of Ancient Indian Education for Indigenous Knowledge Research

Dr Janardan Ghosh, Education Officer & Storyteller
Madhusthali, Madhupur, Jharkhand

This study aims to critically re-examine the performative dimensions of ancient Indian education through an indigenous epistemological framework, examining how embodiment, orality, and aesthetic experience (rasa) were integral to the pedagogical process. At a time when Eurocentric models dominate the global educational discourse, this inquiry posits the necessity of recovering the relational, multisensory, and performative modes of learning embedded in the Indian knowledge traditions. It raises a fundamental set of questions: What epistemic value did oral transmission hold in the Vedic pedagogical model? How did embodiment function as a mode of knowledge internalisation and transformation? What can the Rasa theory offer contemporary educational practices in fostering affective and participatory learning?

Drawing from a cross-disciplinary lens—blending Performance Studies, Indian Philosophy, and Narrative Inquiry—the research will deploy an **arts-based narrative methodology** to trace living practices of indigenous education. Sources will include extant texts (e.g., *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Ashtavakra Gita*, *Bhagavad Purana*), field narratives from gurukulas, traditional crafts communities (e.g., weavers, carpenters, farmers), and oral pedagogic practices among secular artist families. This is supported by textual analysis (Majumdar, Altekar, Mookerji) and critical reflections on colonial biases that have discredited indigenous pedagogies as mere rote learning (Scharfe 1–3). The project engages with the performative not simply as theatrical, but as a lived mode of cognition, wherein the learner and teacher co-create knowledge through dialogic, sensorial, and affective participation.

The study builds upon existing scholarship by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), whose concept of narrative spaces validates the relational ontology of learning, and also aligns with Freirean dialogism and Bhartṛhari's *Sphota* theory, which foregrounds the power of the uttered word in transmitting meaning. Such frameworks challenge the hegemony of text-centric, rationalist paradigms by reclaiming learning as an ontological act rooted in lived, aesthetic, and spiritual engagement. Questions of circularity in learning structures, the significance of embodied sound, and the spatial architecture of knowledge exchanges—such as the guru-shishya arrangement—are examined not as mere cultural artefacts but as sophisticated cognitive technologies with contemporary relevance.

Methodologically, the research will involve fieldwork in identified regions across the Indian subcontinent to document the praxis of orality and embodiment among practitioners. Data will be collected through life stories, apprenticeship observations, ritual performances, and collaborative storytelling sessions. The use of **Art-Based Narrative Inquiry** will facilitate an ethically sensitive and participatory approach, enabling the co-construction of meaning among diverse stakeholders. The study also interrogates the term "performative" to move beyond its perceived

theatricality and reclaim its transformative and ontological potential, as elaborated by Schechner and Boal.

Ultimately, this research contributes to Indigenous Consciousness by offering a decolonised and culturally rooted pedagogic model that foregrounds experience, embodiment, and intersubjectivity. It challenges the bifurcation of mind and body, theory and practice, text and action—proposing instead an integrated model of education that resonates with the lived realities of Indian learners. By doing so, it aims to craft an epistemic shift in educational research methodology, rooted in India's civilisational ethos and capable of informing global discourses on transformative education.

Fireside Chat Discussants

Sanjeev Vidyarthi, Provost, Anant National University, wears many hats. He is an architect, urban designer, spatial planner, scholar, author and leader. His research explores design plans across physical scales, from individual buildings to sprawling metropolitan regions. In the context of contemporary India, he explores who does the city design and planning in such a vast, complex country and how this work unfolds. He served as the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Head of the Department of Urban Planning and Policy at the University of Illinois Chicago — one of North America's largest planning schools. He was also the Founding Director of Chicago's first Master of City Design programme at UIC, a position he held for six years.

Pawan Kumar Gupta, Founding Director, *Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas (SIDH)*, is an engineer with more than 12 years of experience running his own business in the chemical industry, found his calling in facilitating basic education to children in the remote, mountainous villages of India. This led to the founding of SIDH in 1989. Since then, he has run around 35 schools across various mountain villages, providing education to hundreds of children and transforming many lives in the process.

Jyotika Ramaprasad is Professor in the School of Communication, University of Miami, Florida. Her career is largely defined by global work and indigenous understandings. Currently, her work is focused on the use of communication for global social change, largely in the Majority World, that includes both research and creative production in partnership with team members.

Sushant Bharti, a conservation architect and author, is currently based in New Delhi. With a deep interest in India's unique architectural and cultural heritage, he focuses on Braj's intricate religious architecture and culture through his research. His previous work with the National Museum, New Delhi, included documenting Uttar Pradesh and Ladakh culture, an endeavour

that included designing new museums at Kashi Vishwanath and Kedarnath. He has been a Fellow at the Royal Asiatic Society of Ireland and Great Britain and an Associate Fellow at the Royal Historical Society, London.

Vinita Sidhartha was raised in a traditional family and the interaction with her grandparents, uncles and aunts left a deep impact on her and an understanding for Indian cultural traditions. She has a degree in Journalism and Communication from the University of Texas at Austin, USA. On her return to India, she set up Masterpage – a communications consultancy in Content Development where she had leading clients from the Corporate and Media sectors. Watching her children play traditional games, Vinita got greatly fascinated by the subject. The personal and the professional merged with Vinita finding a deep interest in researching traditional games, not only to teach her children but also to revive them. Thus, was born Kreeda in 2002, meaning play in Sanskrit – an organisation that works to research, retail and revive traditional games and the spirit in which they were played.

Kathan Dushyant Shukla is an Associate Professor at the Ravi J. Matthai Centre for Educational Innovation, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. He also serves as the faculty chair for the School Leadership Certificate Programme offered by the institute. Kathan completed his PhD from the University of Virginia in the Educational Research, Statistics and Evaluation programme. He has worked as a postdoctoral fellow and taught educational statistics at the University of Virginia.

Jay Thakkar completed his post-graduation from IIT Kharagpur in 2015 and spent more than two years engaged in industrial research work on the campus. After realising his interest in creative educational methodology, he resigned from his PhD program and joined CCL in April 2019.

Rajendra Singh is the first Professor of Practice in Community Leadership in Environmental Design at Anant National University. Known as the 'Waterman of India,' he has dedicated nearly five decades to environmental and water conservation efforts in India. Born on August 6, 1959, Dr Singh has earned prestigious awards such as the Ramon Magsaysay Award (2001) and the Stockholm Water Prize (2015) for his transformative contributions.

Diti Pundrik Vyas is an Associate Professor at the School of Creative Practices and Entrepreneurship. Through her research, she has concentrated on gender studies, children's literature, communication studies, sustainability communication and indigenous communities. A lot of her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals of repute such as IRCL, Taylor and Francis and Emerald Publication.

Leland S. McGee is on the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education (Penn GSE). His academic credentials include a BS from Brown University, a JD

from Rutgers Law School, and a Master's and Ed.D. from Penn GSE. Dr. McGee's research focuses on advancing education equity through the translation of research to practice, emphasizing learner-centered and community-engaged education.

Puneet Kumar is an Assistant Professor at the School of Creative Practices and Entrepreneurship, Coordinator, Anant Centre for IKSP. A researcher from the University of Delhi, Puneet's scholarly focus lies at the intersection of politics and knowledge, particularly through the lens of Indigenous water management practices across Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi. His written contributions grace the pages of platforms like The Wire, Vikalp Sangam, and Samta Marg.

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