

Editor's Note

When the contemporary development, led by scientific innovations, technological advancement and artificial intelligence is overshadowing the landscape of '*originality*' and furthering the progression of contemporary knowledge, the so called '*high-tech*' man has to pause, reflect and ponder on what he has lost in the world which he terms as '*modernized*' or '*civilized*'. When we talk of a civilised society, what does '*civilised*' mean? Does this mean that the early man or the primitive society was not civilised, whose indigenous way of life and ingenuity made them inventive enough to get fire through a spark by rubbing two stones, which eventually revolutionised human civilisation? Concepts such as '*indigenous*' and '*indigeneity*', born out of academic discourse, have gained recognition and become the catchwords in contemporary society.

The way of life that indigenous communities and primitive societies led was self-sufficient. Right from farming and allied practices to healthcare, water management systems, astronomy, architecture and town planning, textile and handicraft, performing arts and aesthetics, language, literature, and oral traditions, ecology and environmental ethics, metallurgy and material science, food and culinary traditions and law, governance, and social systems. They managed to counter every dilemma they faced from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle to farming, the invention of the wheel, cooking food, curing, and beyond. It's the time-tested wisdom that has fostered the evolution of man, guiding and enlightening every step of human development.

The indigenous knowledge systems remained the body of knowledge ingrained in the life of the traditional societies. These knowledge systems incorporate valuable traditions, practices, and ethos passed down through generations, offering insight into the natural world, sustainability, health, and the balance between man and nature. The modern man wouldn't have looked back to his roots in the past, had not the global challenges provoked him to explore solutions to the present-day

problems. It would be stating the obvious that these challenges have brought the age-old systems of life and living into contemporary discourse. For centuries, civilisations have cultivated closeness with nature, developing sophisticated knowledge systems ingrained in direct observation, spiritual attainment, and collective experience.

Indigenous practices are holistic, underscoring the interrelation of all living things and the need for balance and reciprocity between man and nature. They are not merely the relics of the past; they are the dynamic frameworks, ever evolving and adapting, as time-honoured wisdom and traditional knowledge systems, they have entwined themselves into the socio-cultural milieu of every civilisation across the globe, offering deep insights into sustainable living. However, despite their significance, these systems have often been marginalised or dismissed by colonial frameworks of knowledge generation. The Western epistemologies, which give preference to objectivity, linear thinking, and individualism, weakened these systems, tagging them as '*primitive*', '*unscientific*' or even '*orthodox*'. This marginalization has not only wiped out the contributions of indigenous communities but has also eroded their cultural identities.

The inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems into global frameworks offers a valuable option to re-create an inclusive and sustainable future. However, a meaningful coalition requires an understanding and acceptance that traditional wisdom is equally complementary to Western science. Indian Knowledge Systems show a thoughtful blend of philosophical understanding and practical application, as inscribed in the sacred texts which reveal how ancient spiritual acumens continue to provide practical solutions for the welfare of humanity. The current renaissance in the Traditional Knowledge Systems signifies not a mere retrieval of the "*forgotten past*," but rather a natural evolution of a cultural gamut that has constantly considered wisdom, spirituality, and

ecology as inextricable elements of life. These systems, extolled in the ancient manuscripts, will remain central to the Indian ethos, signifying that sustainability is not a modern innovation but has long been vital to the Indian way of life. By reconnecting with and unifying these traditions with scientific practices, current challenges can be addressed.

This special issue on *"Indigeneity and the Traditional Knowledge Systems"* presents twenty-seven scholarly articles that widely explore rich heritage of traditional wisdom and its contemporary significance, from material culture including temple architecture, ancient martial arts, and folk-art forms like *Patachitra* and *Sanjhi*, to the oral traditions of the Himalayas inherent in mountain music, folk proverbs, and folk songs, serving as repositories of indigenous wisdom. Papers on indigenous communities reveal diverse approaches to the conservation of traditional wisdom, while in some papers analyses of philosophical basics include ancient food traditions, Nyāya philosophy, and the legacy of Indian mathematics. The discussions extend to contemporary applications, focusing on digitization of traditional knowledge for safeguarding it, aligning traditional with SDGs, and

bridging traditional practices with modern education, thus mapping pathways for evocative alliance between ancestral wisdom and modern science.

As these diverse themes converge to celebrate indigeneity, we invite readers to embark on a transformative journey that reveals the enduring significance of traditional knowledge systems in addressing contemporary concerns. I hope this issue will inspire deeper reflection on how ancient wisdom can elucidate pathways toward a more reasonable and sustainable future.

As I conclude this editorial, my thoughts go to Prof Nishamani Kar, who was enthusiastic about the theme of this issue and who submitted his erudite paper without delay. I am pained to put on record that Prof Kar left us suddenly, leaving the academic world impoverished. A scholar par excellence, he was a man with a deep understanding of both literary traditions and traditional knowledge systems. Though his departure leaves a void, his legacy survives through those he guided and motivated. This issue of *Summer Hill* carries his paper entitled, *"The Art of Combat: Yudha Niti, Dharma and Karma in Ancient Indian Martial Practices"*. The scholarly world mourns this irreplaceable loss and pays him a tribute.

Editor