

*From the Editor in Chief*

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*“A nation which has lost its knowledge of itself and its past, cannot develop. The past is the foundation of the present, and the present is the seed of the future.”*

~Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo, a nationalist and philosopher, believed that India needed to awaken to its own inner “Shakti” or power and self - confidence to achieve self -reliance. He believed that the renaissance of Indian culture should guide the modern development. The idea resonated deeply with other national leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, who urged Indians to use indigenous products for economic self -reliance. Thus, for Indians, “Charkha” became a metaphor for self - reliance.

This issue of Vantage takes forward the theme “Knowledge systems of India: Moving towards self-reliance” thoughtfully portrayed on the cover page designed by Saniya, pursuing Physics Honours in Maitreyi College, University of Delhi. The editorial by Rashi Bhargava emphasises on the importance of recognising and appreciating the rich and diverse folk, tribal, and indigenous intellectual traditions and the associated material and non-material culture. Citing Northeast India as an example, she underscores the need to engage with marginalised knowledge systems as they not only have policy implications but also enrich public, academic, and scholarly discourse.

In his Invited article, Pawan Dhar explores the enduring relevance of Indian knowledge systems rooted in philosophy, science, medicine, and arts. He asserts that the ancient knowledge system is immensely important in addressing today’s challenges, and Bharat's traditional wisdom offers a timeless foundation for a self-reliant and technologically empowered future.

Agrawal and Srivastava have reviewed recent advances in light-matter interactions in temporal media, which may open exciting avenues for manipulating light at unprecedented levels. This could lead to novel applications in fields like quantum computing, telecommunications, and

material science, which are the cornerstones of a technologically self-reliant India.

The original research article by Rani and her team investigates the nutritional properties of Golden Kernel Blend—a sustainable flour mixture made from mango seed flour and chickpea flour. By repurposing agricultural waste, the study underscores both the environmental and economic advantages of this innovative blend

Connecting the Science section to the Social Sciences, Shoma Choudhury's original research article illustrates how the democratisation of science by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad restored people’s faith in science during the pandemic, when science was assailed with several uncertainties. Her article reflects the need for an expansive view of science by linking it to other disciplines and, importantly, to society.

The Social Science section presents a thought-provoking and insightful original research article by Ruchi Sharma and Disha Hatikakoty, exploring the connection between social interventions and the philosophical vision of Srimanta Sankardeva, a revered Vaishnav Bhakti saint from Assam. The authors argue that Sankardeva’s *Borgeet*—his devotional compositions—offer a rich framework for engaging with questions of identity, faith, and social reform through the lens of Indic traditions.

This issue of Vantage also features a perspective by Madhu Ramnath about the language of wild food collection in the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, India, where he has lived and worked among the Durwa people. He uses the adivasi, indigenous way of looking at forests and asserts that adivasi people have enormous amounts of information about forests, which, though scientifically intangible, could be a more holistic perception of landscapes.

Rounding off this issue of *Vantage* is a compelling book review by Shoma Choudhury, who delves into *Punching Up in Stand-Up Comedy: Speaking Truth to Power* by Rashi Bhargava and Richa Chillana. The book thoughtfully examines how humour serves as a powerful tool for challenging authority and unsettling

dominant narratives within today's socio-political landscape.

This issue opens a window to the vast range of our systems of knowledge and opens doors to immense possibilities for innovation and change with our gaze turning inwards.

~Haritma Chopra

