

## **Knowledge Democracy: Bridging Knowledge Cultures**

In the current system of socio-economic development around the world, the place of knowledge has become increasingly important. Knowledge economy is seen to be rapidly integrated in the growth strategies of societies. Yet, the dominant knowledge system of our times is the basis for educating and training next generation of professionals. Higher education institutions produce and mobilise the academic knowledge, largely based on European theories and frameworks evolved over a few centuries. Universal access to higher education, mostly conducted in a European language, is further alienating youth from contexts in which their parents live and work.

One of the most invisible forms of exclusion in modern societies, therefore, is that which devalues local, experiential and indigenous knowledge systems. By excluding such local knowledge systems, voices, perspectives and world-views of rural, nomadic, tribal, dalit communities and those of women and the elderly, their democratic participation and inclusive development is obstructed.

Over the past decade, many experiments in community-university partnerships to co-create knowledge solutions have been gaining visibility. Such examples of engaged scholarship have been largely driven from academia. Yet, understanding of community knowledge systems, their rituals, literature, music, stories and artefacts has been rather limited even amongst such innovative practices. A recent international study of "[Bridging Knowledge Cultures](#)" has produced some significant insights into how diverse knowledge systems can be synergised.

Post-Covid context, increasingly facing climate distress, is starting to raise questions about limitations of various knowledge economy models practiced so far. Greater attention to experiential, indigenous, community knowledge to respond to these challenges is being encouraged at national and global levels. India's National education Policy (NEP 2020) has explicitly recommended efforts to integrate community knowledge in teaching and research in higher education. UNESCO's Recommendations on Open Science (universally ratified by all member states) in November 2021 call for valuing multiplicity of epistemologies and systems of community knowledge.

This is an emerging movement towards 'knowledge democracy' which recognises and integrates diversity of knowledge systems.

The Seminar will be an opportunity to share perspectives and experiences of scholars and practitioners to identify practical ways in which authentic bridging may be practiced and taught to next generation.