

**Editorial**

Vedic civilization is considered one of the most ancient civilizations of mankind. A large number of human groups and communities followed Vedic cultures in the ancient world. However, with the invasion of Christianity, Islam, and other belief systems, only a few communities worldwide were able to sustain Vedic cultures in various forms. In this context, it is believed that elements of Rigvedic culture have survived in various Himalayan communities, particularly in South Asia. There is vast literature and lived experiences that include Vedic cultural values and principles, which were unknown to the rest of the world for a very long time.

Before Western scholars began exploring Hindu civilization and its literature, it was widely assumed that the ancient texts of Greece were the oldest known to mankind. This perspective changed when Western scholars encountered the Vedas and Vedic texts. They discovered that the Vedic literature—comprising the four Vedic Samhitas: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda—predated the ancient Greek texts. Western knowledge, literature, and discourse are deeply rooted in Greece, particularly in Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, and in the works of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. However, the Vedic texts form the foundation of a vast body of Sanskrit literature, including Buddhist and Jain texts from the Indian subcontinent. The Vedas also provide the foundation for Hindu cultural practices, politics and social systems.

Among the Vedic texts, the Rigveda (Rigveda Samhita) is considered the most ancient. It is structured into ten chapters, known as Mandalas, containing 1,028 Suktas and 10,552 Mantras. Each Mandala contains mantras organized into thematic groups called Suktas. The Vedic texts convey universal human values and emphasize the sustenance of mankind and the earth. This is the most remarkable quality of the Rigveda. Therefore, it is crucial to revive these values in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as we face the pressing challenge of losing core human principles and ecological balance.

In this context, this journal; ***Rigvedic Himalaya: Journal of Vedic Perspectives & Himalayan Cultures***, seeks to contribute to the production of knowledge rooted in the ancient wisdom and thoughts embedded in the Himalayan cultural-spiritual ecology. The Mukta Foundation organized the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Rigvedic Himalaya (ICRH) on December 7 & 8, 2023, in Pokhara, as a small

initiative to advance such knowledge grounding on the modern traditions of social sciences and humanities. This journal is an outcome of that conference. The event was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of the Gandaki Province Government and was attended by over 200 professionals, researchers, policymakers, scholars, and students, including 35 national and international presenters. The conference was made possible through collaborative efforts with the Central Department of Anthropology at TU, Kirtipur, Gandaki University in Pokhara, the University Grants Commission (UGC), and coordination with other partners, including the Department of Anthropology at Tri-Chandra Multiple Campus, Kathmandu, Pokhara Metropolitan City in Gandaki Province, Gandaki Pragya Pratisthan, Thames International College, Kathmandu, and other esteemed institutions.

This journal includes six research articles, one speech and one book review based on the themes of the conference. Among the research papers three of them focus on Rigveda and Rigvedic perspectives, while the remaining three explore Himalayan cultures. The speech is about the interpretation of the Rigveda and various Vedic texts which is a part of the key note speech presented in the conference which is in Nepali.

The second edition of the conference will be held on the same dates, December 7 & 8, 2024, in Pokhara. We are making a slight change in the title to the 2nd International Conference on Rigveda and Himalaya (ICRH) while maintaining the thematic concepts. Last year, we introduced the concept of "Rigvedic Himalaya" as a unified idea. However, during the preparation and completion of the conference, we realized this is a promising hypothesis for exploring Himalayan cultures from a Rigvedic perspectives, it remains in its early stages and requires extensive work to develop fully.

The publisher of this journal, Mukta Foundation, is a research-oriented institution based in Pokhara, registered under the Company Act of Nepal (2063 B.S.). Its mission is to cultivate social science professionals in Nepal, guided by the motto "Knowledge for Change." Mukta Foundation focuses on generating knowledge from contemporary critical perspectives in the humanities and social sciences, with special emphasis on areas such as the environment, human security, and cultural and area studies. The Foundation also seeks to reconnect present-day knowledge with ancient traditions like the Vedic tradition, which has often been overlooked due to the dominance of modern approaches in the education system—an inheritance from the British colonial legacy in South Asia. In recent decades, we have witnessed the saturation of these hegemonic approaches, prompting global efforts to explore and experiment with

alternative methods. In this context, engaging with Eastern approaches to knowledge production and the pursuit of 'truth' offers a promising alternative for global humanity. This journal is a part of the effort.

In conclusion, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all the authors who contributed their valuable research works to this journal, as well as to those who submitted their work for consideration. We are equally grateful to the reviewers for their insightful feedback, which significantly enhanced the quality of the published papers. Our sincere appreciation also goes to the institutions, organizations, and partners whose unwavering support and collaboration made this publication possible. We recognize the importance of these collective efforts in advancing the scholarly conversation on the Vedic knowledge and perspectives and Himalayan cultures. This journal is a testament to the power of collaboration, and we hope to foster continued partnerships in the pursuit of knowledge and exploration of these ancient traditions in future editions as well.

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