

Where Ideas Go Silent: Reflections on Research Culture in Indian Universities

H. Kalpana Rao¹

Abstract: This essay reflects on the condition of research in India's public and central universities. After more than three decades as a teacher and researcher, I find it troubling that the scholarship emerging from our institutions continues to fall short of global standards. Despite several policy documents, committee reports, and public discussions on research quality, meaningful reform has not taken root. Barring a few science and technology institutes, India's global rankings remain far below acceptable norms. The issue, however, is not only the persistence of this decline but the deeper systemic causes that sustain it. Drawing on my journey as a teacher and researcher, I examine the institutional disconnections that shape the research culture of our universities. This is not a personal critique but an attempt to illuminate the structural, cultural, and pedagogical gaps that constrain research scholarships. Research itself is not a single linear activity but is a composite practice involving doctoral work, independent projects, publication, and participation in academic forums. To revisit the idea of research, this essay considers four interconnected domains—the structure of doctoral programmes, the pursuit of research projects, the production of scholarly papers, and the role of academic forums such as conferences and seminars. To explain the pillar on which these domains lean, the article will initially examine the concept of research with a focus on research as a source of knowledge.

Keywords: research, doctoral programme, research projects, paper publications, academic conferences, Indian university

Introduction

Over the years, I have observed that the research climate in India's public and central universities¹ has undergone a sea change. These changes, rather than providing a steady sense of growth and improvement, have led to disillusionment. After three decades of teaching and research in an Indian Central university, I find myself troubled by this drift and disappointed at the turn the research environment has taken. A particularly troubling and unsettling reality is our insignificant numbers in global rankings across most standard metrics. Does this imply that Indian scholars do not conduct research at all? Hardly. Yet the question

remains, triggering several queries: Does it indicate that the research papers and dissertations produced in Indian universities amount to little more than quantified outputs? Why are we lagging? Where does the breakdown occur if our research fails to generate value? What exactly are researchers pursuing when they claim to be doing 'research?' Is there any reliable data to inform us regarding the quality of research in the university systems? Do our academic institutions create the conditions necessary for research to flourish? Many such queries crop up in my mind, refusing to settle. I sought to understand how my journey as an educator and researcher could serve as a lens through which systemic failures might

¹ Former Professor, Department of English, Pondicherry University, Puducherry – 605014. Puducherry, India

be probed, and whether these reflections could offer a starting point for rethinking our research culture.

It is also necessary that one examines the concept of research not just in terms of what happens in a laboratory or with a publication, but more holistically, delving into the idea of conceptualising research as an idea or concept, the doctoral programmes in universities, the implementation of research projects, and the outreach of research through publications and conferences.

Interrogating the Idea of Research

Research fundamentally meant an enquiry, a pursuit of knowledge, a curiosity, and an intellectual exercise. Yet, today in our university system, the idea is diminished, caught in the crosscurrents of promotions, metrics, bureaucratic hassles, institutional indifference and blind compliance. The gap between knowledge and outcome has deeply affected research output, and as a result, research is no longer a scholarly exercise but an administrative requirement. The gap arises in the university itself, as there is confusion in understanding what the function of a university is—teaching or research? For decades, administrators of the university system have thought that teaching is more important than research, thereby relegating research work to a secondary and ornamental pursuit.

What is forgotten in this hierarchy is that teaching and research are not competing activities, but each sustains the other. Good faculty with innovative teaching inevitably bring intellectual vitality into the curriculum, which in turn sparks research ideas. When teaching is divorced from research, both suffer - teaching becomes routine, and research becomes disconnected from the lived academic environment. This contemporary confusion is not accidental; it is rooted in the very foundations of the Indian

university system, which was designed to serve colonial priorities rather than scholarly ones.

A primary problem in India is that the establishment of the University suffered due to colonisation. Wood's despatch in 1854 discussing the viability of establishing universities and the concept of education in India mentions that the structuring of the University would follow the London University pattern, and mentions that education would help provide for British labour:

We have, moreover, always looked upon the encouragement of education as peculiarly important, because calculated 'not only to produce a higher degree of intellectual fitness, but to raise the moral character of those who partake of its advantages, and so to *supply you with servants to whose probity you may with increased confidence commit offices of trust*' (6, emphasis mine)

Based on this, in 1857, the University of Calcutta, the University of Bombay, and the University of Madras were established, and subsequently, Punjab University (1882), Allahabad University (1887), Benaras Hindu University (1916), and Aligarh Muslim University (1920) came into being. This historical account gives us a picture of the colonial mentality that would already have structured the university system. These historical legacies continue to shape our academic culture, particularly in how we distinguish between research as knowledge and research as conformity. After Independence, in 1949, under the leadership of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a University Education Commission was constituted, and a full-fledged policy for university education was chalked out. Disappointingly, in the chapter on 'Aims of the University', the commission focuses on moral codes, such as loyalty, fraternity, and character, as being important aspects to be imparted, rather

than any aim related to research. (Chapter II, 27-58) The structure of a top-down policy and the purpose of higher education to reform students is a type of conditioning, and faculty too are continuously shaped to be mere instructors.

A crucial distinction must therefore be made between research as knowledge and research as conformity. Research based on the concept of knowledge is built on curiosity, innovation, critical thinking, and passion, while research based on conformity needs only obedience and compliance. Research based on knowledge values depth, originality, and reflection, coupled with patient satisfaction. Research of conformity, by contrast, is driven by career growth, promotions, and the outcome is ticking a few boxes.

The idea of research demands an understanding of its forms. It is not a linear or superficial activity but requires coordinated planning. The feature of intellectual pursuit and moral fibre, accompanied by words, leads to a scholarship paving the way for pursuing an enquiry. A key aim of a university is learning and scholarship. The methodology and process of research may differ based on fields such as science, commerce, or liberal arts. Yet the end goal of each is the advancement of knowledge. When faculty are engaged in research, their knowledge depth and understanding increase, and they can help students not just acquire degrees and succeed in careers but, more excitingly, pursue knowledge. Research can be fundamental, like in the liberal arts, or could be applied, as in the sciences. Both are essential as fundamental research provides ideas for the betterment of humans and society, while applied research helps to solve practical problems, such as diseases or environmental problems. These two forms of research are necessary, and the long-standing tendency to value

sciences and technology more than liberal arts is not conducive to educational institutions.

The ideals that one associates with a university, such as inquiry, dialogue, conversation, discovery, creativity, and innovation, hardly survive within the humdrum of routine academics. The routine demands of teaching and evaluation play a predominant role in the academic life of faculty in a university. Overloaded teaching and administrative demands rule the day-to-day life of the professors, and a steady reflective meditative space needed for academics is progressively eroding. Faculty spend enormous amounts of time trying to complete syllabi rather than guiding students to cultivate ideas. Science departments face financial constraints and poorly sourced laboratories, while liberal arts departments suffer from similarly inadequate resources. As a result, scholars, pressured by the need to show results, turn to dubious publication avenues. Under this pressure to produce, science faculty often resort to superficial research output and, in extreme cases, even data manipulation, while liberal arts faculty are pushed toward publishing in predatory journals.

The crisis has deepened as there is a near absence of a genuine research culture. What were the heart throbs of a university, such as reading groups, active research clusters, inspiring faculty, writing programmes, and informal debates, are now lost and replaced with fear and anxiety, as open critical discussions and brainstorming events are frowned upon. Added to this is the phobia of someone taking and manipulating one's ideas and resources. Mentorship by supervisors has become a bureaucratic formality offering little intellectual growth. This is very evident in doctoral programmes where the lack of scholarly mentorship has led to weak research production.

An essential issue in this scenario is the matter of epistemic training. Many young research scholars are not taught how to create a credible research question or to construct an argument. They have no knowledge of a hypothesis, a thesis statement, or documentation. Gathering information is often thought to be research, and summarising and paraphrasing become substitutes for analysis. This lack of conceptual thinking and critical engagement results in weak data analysis and low originality in these formations. Another important part of research is autonomy, because if scholars are permitted to pursue unconventional ideas, challenge stereotypes and conditioned biases, and raise uncomfortable questions, then the results they produce may turn out to be more knowledge-driven and scholarly rather than being pedantic.

Research today is in many ways tied to global knowledge networks through collaborations, peer reviews, international forums, and access to global publications. However, many Indian universities remain disconnected and more insular. Thus, scholarship is inward-looking and breeds cynicism rather than broadening the horizons of knowledge. A key aspect of any research is ethics, and knowing about responsible documentation and citation is extremely significant. But research cultures in universities lack respect for intellectual labour and indulge in plagiarism and improper documentation, thereby undermining the credibility of the university. In such circumstances, research is inevitably compromised and instead of being a passionate enquiry turns out to be instrumental for promotions.

The university must also rethink the core component of its knowledge structure and academic life. It is not a singular, isolated activity but is interwoven through various fabrics of the university, such as the university's aim and vision, the teaching

processes, the mutual connectivity of knowledge and society, the impact on better systems of life, and an intellectual platform. Research activity has many steps, such as doctoral research, projects, publications, and community engagement. Each of these requires time, resources, and freedom, and when a healthy, vibrant culture is missing in universities, then research takes a backseat.

It is significant to analyse how research is unfolding internationally. In the last few decades worldwide, there has been an increase in interdisciplinary research, cross-connections between varied fields, collaborative stages, digital platforms, and direct access to scholarship. Indian universities are yet to move into this sphere and are unfortunately caught in rigid departmental boundaries, egocentric leadership, limited support for cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary work, hierarchical biases, influence of external personal factors, thereby creating a weak and impoverished research environment. Adding to this are the dense, obsolete content-driven curricula and uninspiring classroom teaching methodologies, which lessen the ability to think and improvise. Students have no scope for interrogation and end up as passive, servile extensions of departments and institutions. Furthermore, the lack of community engagement and societal interactions has led to knowledge being elitist and weak. Using the realities and regional complexities around us and paying attention to indigenous knowledge systems, coupled with Western epistemologies, could help further the research base. It is essential to learn intellectual independence rather than intellectual dependence. A vibrant research culture rests on confidence in one's hypothesis, in one's methodologies and in the intellectual traditions that sustain inquiry. Without this, the research work is merely a procedure and not an innovation.

PhD Training and Research Practice

The doctoral degree is the pinnacle in any university. It is the programme that forms the basis of research enquiry, and still, it is sadly lost in an attempt at gaining a degree. A healthy critical enquiry into the process of creative or scientific endeavour is a far-away ideal. Uneven supervision, outdated pedagogical structures, and inconsistent evaluation procedures lead to poor research output. Added to this is the lack of constructive guidelines and proper research methodologies, leading to deficient doctoral dissertations.

PhD is designated as a degree to be obtained not for knowledge but for the requirements of a career. The doctoral degree is not a credential, but a commitment meant to train scholars in the art of questioning and critically analysing methodologies and processes to depict newer strains of thought/ideas/concepts. The University system does not extend any teaching curriculum to explain research designs, nor does it provide theory or methodology to provide a good foundation for research. As a result, scholars have no clue as to how to enquire, ask probing questions, think critically and objectively, and seek innovative ideas.

In recent years, to remedy this issue, coursework has been initiated as part of a UGC initiative for doctoral students. Once again, this becomes meaningless as the syllabi are perfunctory and may not be contemporary. The coursework may not even be taught, or even if it is, it ends up being routine classroom lectures. There is a need to overhaul this by creating rigorous methodology courses, holding writing seminars, and initiating reading groups. This can be supplemented by brainstorming ideas or, in the sciences, with laboratory technique training. The extension of the postgraduate classroom model, which is content-heavy

and disconnected from students' research trajectory, is to be reviewed and set right.

In addition to this, there is the reality that supervisors are overburdened with teaching, and their own lack of reading and scholarship pushes them to be dominant and hegemonic, creating hierarchies rather than being mentors. Consequently, scholars lack intellectual acumen and do routine work to obtain the degree. Furthermore, the slow administrative processes and the delays in adjudication erode momentum and morale. Compounding this further, there are financial constraints in the sciences and 'library poverty' in the humanities and social sciences. Within this deplorable condition, there is pressure to publish, and scholars with no guidance and writing skills end up publishing in predatory journals. The trouble does not end here, as scholars are not allowed to choose their topics freely and are discouraged from interdisciplinary work. Thus, a doctoral scholar's autonomy is frequently curtailed by institutional bureaucracy, disciplinary rigidity, supervisory preferences, ill-equipped supervisors, financial constraints, and library access. There is an urgent need to create an ecosystem where scholars can be intellectually stimulated and be able to impact with their research work.

Finally, there is a much sought-after need to inculcate ethics into research scholars by drilling into them that plagiarism and data fabrication are wrong. Unless ethical training is initiated, we will end up hearing stories of copying and cheating. One can sum up by stating that the PhD programme at present prepares students to complete a thesis, not to become scholars. When training during doctoral programmes is deficient, it naturally leads to weak research output. Scholars are unable to think independently and innovate using ideas and concepts. There is a great need for doctoral programmes in universities to strengthen

research practices by creating an environment that encompasses skills such as critical reading and writing, but also increases the ability to think and question. This can be augmented if universities create a structured research ecosystem. Unfortunately, in most universities, scholars have no designated workspaces or proper library resources. Added to this lack of basic infrastructure is a troubling point, as many institutions lack functional libraries, digital databases, and quiet reading rooms that nurture research and initiate an ambience for research. Many scholars struggle with psychological depression due to the absence of emotional and intellectual nourishment, highlighting a strong need for instituting counselling centres.

Internationally recognised scholars are seen as important assets in a university, and they are oriented with proficient writing programmes, seminars, colloquia, documentation, and methodology workshops. Furthermore, departments as well as the institutions provide access to infrastructure, with some universities even having housing for married scholars. Along with these, supervisors conduct weekly seminars, help scholars in their reading, and spend time trying to morally boost them. In contrast, Indian scholars end up meeting their supervisors only for administrative signatures or perfunctory doctoral committee meetings. Hence, research scholars end up not knowing the outcome of research and are saddled with self-doubt, estrangement, and anxiety. The added pressure of publishing and rejection adds to their emotional and psychological state. Universities need to create centres that can orient supervisors on their role in shaping their research scholars and enable scholars to learn the principles of academic writing. It could also help by providing training in presentation skills and speaking skills so that scholars learn how to articulate confidently.

Finally, the PhD programme must be understood within the landscape of academic employment. With shrinking faculty positions and a large amount of influence, scholars have no clarity about their future. This results in a sense of disappointment and disillusionment, and research becomes just a process for gaining a degree. Unless the universities create better environments, the doctoral programme will continue to be a credential rather than a commitment.

Research Projects and Institutional Practise

Research projects help to provide an infrastructure to shape objective enquiries through collaboration and cooperation. They also help shape knowledge for a better society. Yet application for projects remains a hurdle with excessive application processes as well as bureaucratic bottlenecks, leading to frustration and incomplete scientific enquiries. Moreover, access to a grant is replete with varied acts of influence rather than merit, thereby creating disillusionment in academic faculty.

A major problem while applying for research grants by faculty or scholars is that the call for proposals is released with minimal dissemination in universities. The departments and the universities lack a designated research officer or a nodal centre that can track, share, and interpret these announcements. The faculty involved with teaching and administrative duties learn about opportunities close to deadlines, and hence cannot submit strong proposals. The websites of the funding agencies are not very user-friendly and create innumerable problems for the applicants while applying.

Researchers who have no basic training cannot produce detailed and operationally sound proposals as they have little or no knowledge regarding project design, budgeting, or the long-term and short-term goals

of the research. Humanities scholars are stumped quite often, as the funding and financial templates are far beyond their understanding. Hence, research proposals are usually poorly structured and not aligned with the funding agency's expectations. When projects are sanctioned, it becomes a nightmare for the researchers as they must tackle innumerable problems. The major issue is the bureaucratic setup with heads and deans who do not pass the project proposals or the research output due to authoritative stances. The release of funds is often held up due to bureaucratic procedures. Universities impose layers of approval, slowing down even routine expenditures. The procurement rules are rigid and time-consuming, making fieldwork, the purchase of books, and hiring research assistants exceedingly difficult. The faculty struggle with heavy teaching loads, unable to concentrate on the project work. Hence, they miss timelines, diluting the research work and, at times, losing momentum. A sanctioned project should be a moment of intellectual possibility, not an administrative negotiation. If a researcher manages to complete a project, the winding up involves financial documentation such as utilisation certificates, audited statements, receipts, and vouchers. The University often lacks personnel to assist with these procedures. Even minor errors in documentation lead to stagnation of the outcome or even to the release of the next level of funding. Many times, faculty advance money from their personal funds with the hope that reimbursement bills will be settled. There is a perpetual sense of anxiety when accounting becomes more important than the labour of research. Due to delayed funding, researchers are forced to complete projects in a superficial manner. Fieldwork is tardy as there is no institutional support. Interdisciplinary or collaborative projects take a beating as the system does not facilitate coordination across disciplines or universities.

Final reports become more of a compilation rather than research narratives.

In conclusion, one could say that researchers feel demoralised and alone while handling projects, and the joy of inquiry is replaced by the stress of conformity and compliance. Hence, many faculty members avoid applying for projects as they feel that it is mentally stressful. Therefore, the tragedy is that researchers lose faith in the very idea of a funded project. This also impacts publication as researchers present results that are fabricated rather than truly researched. These systemic hurdles inevitably shape the quality of research output, particularly in the realm of publications, which remain the primary measure of scholarly contribution.

Publishing and the Making of a Research Culture

The most meaningful output of research is through research publications, but sadly, this culture is now driven by quantity rather than quality. Publishing is done more for promotions and improving one's *curriculum vitae* rather than for the pleasure of sharing research. The mushrooming predatory journals and paid publications have taken a toll on the quality of research.

Publishing is a big part of research as it is an important way of communicating research ideas in the sciences and a contribution to furthering knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. In the Indian university system, publication is most often a requirement rather than a responsibility. To gain a foothold in the higher echelons and get promotions, young faculty end up trying to publish in journals where acceptance is quick, and review is minimal. This has led to a loss of credibility globally. Despite strict warnings regarding plagiarism and publishing in predatory journals, the trend continues. The reason for this is that there

is no regulatory body either in the university or at the UGC level to punish such misdemeanours.

Another factor that leads to publication in falsely claimed peer-reviewed journals is that publishing in international journals is quite difficult for assorted reasons. The review cycles are long, and edits need intense work from the researchers. Moreover, they are also caught in the stereotype of being researchers from India, a stereotype reinforced by long-standing concerns about credentials. The other major factor that international journals are wary of is academic writing. Since we do not train our students and faculty in academic writing, most often they author articles that are formulaic, heavy with jargon, and badly written. The authors have no idea of crafting arguments, writing coherently, and creating structured essays. A single draft is thought to be the final one. There is a complete disregard for style sheets, and articles are written without clear documentation rules.

To strengthen this, universities should encourage departments to develop journals or newsletters where faculty and scholars can contribute meaningful research each month. The university can also develop a well-run writing centre that has faculty trained in writing and language skills. Collaborative publication across departments and inter-university disciplines would help assist in healthy partnership and cooperation. Mentorship programmes for early researchers would also be an immense help. Beyond publications, research also circulates through academic gatherings such as conferences and seminars, which ideally serve as spaces of dialogue and exchange.

Disseminating Research through Conferences and Seminars

Conferences, seminars, and symposia are intellectual spaces that help shape academic

expertise. These forums in Indian universities have become farcical exercises where quantity is valued far more than quality. Labels, titles, and themes rarely generate meaningful dialogue; instead, they function as bureaucratic markers that satisfy institutional requirements rather than intellectual needs.

The meaning and purpose of research become meaningful only when there is knowledge dissemination. This propagation of knowledge happens through various collaborative discursive spaces such as workshops, symposia, seminars, and conferences. Workshops and symposia are oriented towards smaller groups and, in most cases, close-knit groups of similar interests. On the other hand, global outreach happens through seminars and conferences. Over the last two decades, as I have participated in humanities seminars and conferences, I have observed several recurring patterns. Most events are often one-day affairs centred around a narrowly defined theme. The inaugural ceremony is typically celebratory, with the hosting institution focusing heavily on the hierarchy and status of dignitaries. The term ‘international’ is frequently used as a branding tool justified by the presence of one or more overseas academics or international students, rather than by genuine global collaboration.

Plenary presenters are allotted 30-45 minutes for their talks, but these timelines are rarely adhered to. Furthermore, discussions following plenary talks are almost typically non-existent. Paper presentations are often scheduled after lunch or run parallel to resource talks, with chairpersons overseeing hurried 5-7-minute presentations by students and early-career scholars. Many resource persons deliver impromptu talks rather than prepared lectures/presentations. Presenters, aware of the format, often prepare minimal material, treating the event more as a resume-building exercise rather

than an opportunity for a genuine academic exchange.

In several institutions, students are assigned the logistical burden of overseeing the conference work, such as receiving guests, decorating the hall, and coordinating the tea and lunch requirements. The seminar becomes an academic feast rather than an intellectual exercise. This once again raises discussion points about whether seminars and conferences cultivate dialogue or are just a fun event to meet colleagues and pat each other's backs. Unfortunately, even academic rankings pay more attention to quantifiable numbers rather than intellectual substance. Headcounts are significant, and labels such as 'national' and 'international' gain prominence. A large amount of time is spent managing food and accommodation requirements. Given this scenario, we must rethink how such events are organised and what the expected outcome is. Academic gatherings should function as meaningful sites of engagement and learning spaces where learning is deepened through discipline-rich conversations and knowledge is shared with the goal of deepening critical engagements. To reclaim that vision, we need to redesign these forums so that participation, reflection, and genuine scholarly exchange take precedence over grandeur, spectacle, and statistics.

To enhance the quality of a conference, the organising department should first identify a clear focus area. For instance, if there are limited resources or expertise in Climate Studies, the event could centre on that theme. Planning should begin at least six months in advance, with a well-defined concept note, objectives, and a call for papers clearly outlined on the institution's website and academic platforms. Although 1-2 coordinators may be identified, it is necessary that all faculty members of the department share the responsibility of conceiving, planning, and conducting the

event. Logistical details such as accommodation, registration, and other essential information should be shared early. Before issuing a call for papers, it is important to identify two or three key resource people who can provide foundational insights and offer ideas or concepts for research. Students of host institutions must be encouraged to understand the academic significance of such events and be nurtured to participate actively in discussions rather than being confined to logistical duties. When academic engagement becomes central, the outcomes of these gatherings benefit all participants. Beyond these measures, conferences need to enforce firm submission deadlines and institute a rigorous review process so that genuine and highly academic work is displayed. Getting feedback after every event is vital as it helps to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the conference.

Conclusion

Confronting the problems identified in this article requires more than policy reforms; it demands a fundamental reimagining of what a university is and what it stands for. The deficiency in research is not the result of one flaw but an entire system of defects of various kinds, namely historical legacies, structural weaknesses, cultural and social complexities, heterogeneous demographics, social hierarchies, pedagogical gaps, and ethical lapses feeding into one another. Repairing this deficiency will take far more than revising policies. It calls for radical rethinking of the university itself, which will need to reimagine its values of what it wishes to uphold.

In recent years, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has attempted to re-envision the higher education landscape by emphasising multidisciplinary learning, research integration, and institutional restructuring. Its proposal for a national research

foundation and the call for universities to strengthen research ecosystems signal an important shift. Nevertheless, policy alone cannot transform research culture unless it is put into practice by creating suitable research environments.

A meaningful transformation must begin with reclaiming the intellectual purpose of the university. An effective way to initiate this transformation in the university is through the establishment of a University Research Centre (URC), a dedicated institutional body responsible for nurturing, monitoring and sustaining research across disciplines. Such a centre needs to be run by a committee rather than a single person, and it should not be a mere symbolic unit but a functional, empowered space that oversees the entire research ecosystem of the university. Serving as a backbone for research in the university, it can coordinate research activities, ensure methodological rigour and provide scholars with the support they need to pursue meaningful inquiry. It also needs to be totally free of any bureaucratic or administrative partisanship and act as a nodal centre to track calls for proposals, disseminate information in a timely manner, assist with project design and guide faculty and scholars through budgeting, documentation and compliance procedures.

Confronting the research crisis also means clearing the structural and bureaucratic hurdles that hold back research, which is essential, and the research centre could help create a central digital research archive that is well organised and well maintained, which can lead to good, dependable research and, at the same time, help preserve institutional memory, prevent repetitions in research, and create more transparent evaluations.

An active Research Centre could anchor the entire research programme of an institution. Headed by an able committee drawn from different fields, it can initiate a few activities to help and support research. Hosting writing workshops, reading groups, methodology classes, and interdisciplinary dialogues could rebuild the research initiatives. Such a centre can also help to lessen ego-centric approaches, dominant ideologies, and social hierarchies. It could also help alleviate the psychological issues of scholars and young faculty. It would build trust and a more inclusive environment. The research centre can also create norms for citation, authorship data handling, processing fees, and act decisively when standards are violated. To sum up, the need of the hour is for universities to establish an independent research centre with digital tools, academic expertise, and the authority to act, which could create a positive change. Only with such measures can research move beyond box-ticking and return to what it should be: a genuine pursuit of knowledge, imagination, and meaning.

References

- General Council on Education in India. (1854). *The Despatch of 1854: General education in India* [PDF]. Internet Archive. https://ia801801.us.archive.org/19/items/dli.ministry.01649/1245.172%2520H%2520145%25284%2529_text.pdf
- India, Ministry of Education. (1949). *The report of the University Education Commission (December 1948–August 1949)* (Vol. 1). Manager of Publications. <http://www.academics-india.com/Radhakrishnan%20Commission%20Report%20of%201948-49.pdf>

Note: This article is focused on the work culture I was part of in a Public Central University, which I believe reflects broader patterns within Indian higher education. My use of the terms 'Indian and Indian university/universities' should be read in this context. There could also be a few exceptions in terms of universities that have



robust and healthy research cultures, but the article wishes to focus on the broader malaise that is part of most university systems.