



ICSSR Research Project

**Kashi Vishwanath in Itivriti and Popular Smriti: An Empirical
Study of Art,
Craft and Folk Practices of the Cultural Corridor**



**National Workshop
on**

**DECODING ART, CRAFT AND FOLK PRACTICES IN
ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH: A STUDY OF THE
CULTURAL CORRIDOR OF VARANASI**

Funded by ICSSR, New Delhi



6th & 7th March 2025



DAV PG College, Varanasi

Organized by

Department of English

(Under the Aegis of IQAC)

D.A.V. Post Graduate College

**(Admitted to the Privileges of Banaras
Hindu University)**

(Accredited by NAAC with Grade A+)



IEDS

**in collaboration with
IEDS, New Delhi**

REPORT

The Department of English, DAV PG College, Varanasi, in collaboration with the IEDS, New Delhi, organized a two-day National Workshop on “Decoding Art, Craft, and Folk Practices in Ethnographic Research: A Study of the Cultural Corridor” on March 6th & 7th, 2025. The workshop was conducted under the aegis of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, as part of the major research project titled “Kashi Vishwanath in Itivriti and Popular Smriti: An Empirical Study of Art, Craft, and Folk Practices of the Cultural Corridor.”



The inaugural session commenced with a welcome address by Dr. Priyanka Singh, Assistant Professor of Political Science, DAV PG College, followed by Dr. Mahima Singh, Convener of the Workshop and Project Coordinator, who introduced the theme of the workshop. She emphasised the interconnected nature of art, craft, and folk traditions, noting their archetypal characteristics and universal significance.

The Chief Guest, Prof. Dhananjay Singh, Member Secretary, ICSSR, in his address, stressed the importance of research initiatives that enrich cultural ethos alongside material progress. He underscored the unique position of Banaras as India's cultural capital, highlighting the role of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in preserving and disseminating Varanasi's cultural heritage on a global scale.



Prof. Dhananjay Singh, Member Secretary, ICSSR

Prof. Rana P. B. Singh, Department of Geography, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), in his Keynote address, delivered an insightful lecture on the sacred geography of Kashi. He described Kashi as a “cultural cosmos” where divinity and humanity converge, making it a distinct tirtha (sacred site). He elaborated on the transformations witnessed in the sacred landscapes of Kashi Vishwanath due to modernization while maintaining the essence of its traditional practices.



**Prof. Rana P.B. Singh, (Rtd.)
Dept. of Geography, BHU**



Q&A with Prof. Rana P.B. Singh

The Guest of Honour, Dr. Vyomesh Shukla, writer and director, explored various oral traditions (Shruti) and their literary representations, shedding light on the unique behavioural patterns of Banarasi culture. Prof. K. M. Pandey, Department of English, BHU, presided over the session, elucidating the artistic and spiritual dimensions of the corridor. He emphasised the significance of Lord Shiva's Nataraja form, which symbolises the divine patronage of art.



Dr. Vyomesh Shukla



Prof. K.M. Pandey, Dept. of English, BHU

In the subsequent sessions, Prof. K. M. Pandey examined the evolving nature of culture, asserting that while cultural expressions undergo transformation, their foundational ethos remains constant. Dr. Ravi Shankar Pandey, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, highlighted Kashi's spiritual identity as Anandvan, the abode of Shiva, where diverse cultural practices serve as sources of inspiration. He also discussed the Guru Parampara (lineage of teachers) and its enduring impact, emphasizing that while individual Gurus may pass away, their spiritual legacy (Guruttava) continues.



**Dr. Ravishankar Pandey,
Sampurnanand Sanskrit University**



Brainstorming and Panel Discussion

A dedicated discussion and brainstorming session provided participants an opportunity to engage with ethnographic methodologies, focusing on the study of art, craft, and folk traditions. A total of 60 participants from various states, including Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Assam, took part in the workshop. Participants were assigned response-based tasks to enhance their practical understanding of ethnographic research.



On the second day, participants submitted their response sheets, containing their analytical write-ups on folk art, craft, and ethnographic research in Varanasi. The fifth session featured a lecture by Prof. P. Dalai, Department of English, BHU, who provided a theoretical framework for ethnographic studies, integrating Husserl's phenomenological approach with contemporary research on Varanasi's cultural corridor. His session included audio-visual documentation of the city's landscape.

Dr. Varada Sambhus, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), deliberated on the methodological nuances of ethnographic research.

She emphasized the need for a sensitive and immersive approach while working with cultural heritage and informants, distinguishing between theoretical and practical dimensions of ethnographic inquiry.



Prof. P. Dalai, Dept. of English, BHU



Dr. Varada Sambhus, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, JNU

The valedictory session featured prominent scholars, including, Prof. Nita Kumar, Prof. Badri Narayan Tiwari, and Prof. Archana Kumar. Prof. Tiwari, a social historian and cultural anthropologist from G. B. Pant Social Science Institute, Prayagraj, discussed the mapping of existing art, craft, and folk traditions in Varanasi, emphasizing the importance of considering marginalized communities in such research.



Valedictory Session Panel



Prof. Badri Narayan Tiwari, G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Prayagraj

Prof. Nita Kumar, Brown Professor Emerita of South Asian History at Claremont McKenna College, provided insights into ethnographic methodologies, drawing from her seminal works, including “The Artisans of Banaras- Popular Culture and Identity, 1880-1986” and “Friends, Brothers, Informants”. She stressed the necessity of building empathetic relationships with informants to ensure the authenticity of collected data. Prof. Nita Kumar is the Director of a non-profit organisation, Nirman, which works extensively with children, artisanal families, and cultural preservation in Varanasi.



Prof. Nita Kumar, Brown Professor Emerita of South Asian History, Claremont McKenna College, California

Prof. Archana Kumar, Department of English, BHU, delivered the presidential address, synthesizing key discussions and underscoring the role of ethnographic research in cultural preservation and folk practices.

**Prof. Archana
Kumar, Dept. of
English, BHU**



**Prof. Indrajeet Mishra, Dept. of
English, DAV PG College**



**Dr. Mahima Singh, Project
Coordinator**

The valedictory session featured a report presentation by Dr. Mahima Singh, summarising the key deliberations of the workshop. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Prof. Indrajeet Mishra, followed by the distribution of certificates to selected participants. This workshop, conducted under the ICSSR-funded research project, marked a significant step toward advancing ethnographic studies on Varanasi's art, craft, and folk traditions, offering an interdisciplinary platform for scholarly discourse and empirical engagement.