

EMBRACING
INDIGENOUS PRODUCTS

In an era of globalization, where products from across the world are easily accessible, the call to "Use Indigenous Products" has become more relevant and necessary than ever before. Rooted in the idea of *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* (Self-Reliant India), this movement is not just about preferring locally made goods over imported ones—it is about rekindling a sense of national pride, empowering local industries, and fostering sustainable development.

Indigenous products reflect the cultural richness, traditional knowledge, and craftsmanship of a region. From handmade textiles, organic produce, Ayurvedic products, and tribal handicrafts to homegrown technological innovations, India's indigenous industries are both diverse and deep-rooted. By supporting these products, consumers directly contribute to the livelihoods of millions of artisans, farmers, small-scale manufacturers, and startups that form the backbone of the Indian economy.

The economic rationale for choosing indigenous goods is clear. India imports a significant quantity of goods that could be domestically produced with equal efficiency and quality. Encouraging the use of local products helps reduce trade deficits, boosts domestic manufacturing, and creates employment opportunities. It promotes the development of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises), which are crucial to India's economic health and resilience. Each purchase of an indigenous item is an investment in the nation's future.

Beyond the economy, there is a social and environmental dimension to this shift. Locally produced goods often have a lower carbon footprint as they require less transportation and packaging. Many indigenous products are made using eco-friendly and sustainable practices that have been passed down through generations. Supporting these practices contributes to environmental conservation and helps preserve traditional knowledge systems that are under threat in the face of industrial mass production.

The government has played an instrumental role in promoting indigenous products through various schemes like "Vocal for Local," "Make in India," and "One District One Product." E-commerce platforms and digital marketplaces have also begun to provide space for rural artisans and entrepreneurs to reach wider audiences. However, policy and promotion alone cannot succeed without conscious consumer participation.

It is essential that we, as citizens, reflect on our consumption patterns. Instead of being swayed by brand names or imported labels, we must evaluate products based on quality, utility, and their contribution to national development. Educational institutions, media, and community organizations can play a key role in raising awareness about the benefits of indigenous products.

Using indigenous products is not about rejecting globalization; it is about creating a more balanced and inclusive economy that values its roots while embracing progress. It is a patriotic act, a sustainable choice, and an economic necessity rolled into one. In every indigenous product lies a story of a community, a culture, and a commitment to the nation.

Writing a New Grammar of Happiness: The Anandam Initiative at IIM Jammu

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We live in a time shaped by rapid connectivity, intense competition, and increasing complexity. For students, this environment offers many opportunities but also brings significant psychological challenges. Across higher education institutions, there is growing concern about the rising levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional fatigue among young people. National studies and campus reports consistently point to a troubling trend: students struggling quietly beneath the surface-managing academic demands while dealing with self-doubt, social pressure, and uncertainty about the future. The emotional impact of this silent crisis is serious, and it demands thoughtful and timely attention.

IIM Jammu responded to this pressing need with thoughtful insight and a deep sense of institutional responsibility. Recognising that student well-being required more than temporary or surface-level interventions, the Institute made a sustained and purposeful commitment by establishing Anandam: The Centre for Happiness. Inaugurated in March 2021 by the then Union Minister of Education, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', in the esteemed presence of the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Shri Manoj Sinha, and with the blessings of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the Centre marked a significant step toward aligning education with its deeper purpose—the holistic nurturing of well-rounded, emotionally resilient, and ethically grounded individuals.

From its inception, Anandam has been guided by a foundational principle: that instead of simply adopting Western models of wellness, there exists a vast and time-tested repository within the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) offering deeply contextual and sustainable insights into emotional well-being. Drawing upon this indigenous legacy, Anandam has steadily grown into a centre of excellence in the field of mental health and holistic living. Its philosophy rests on the understanding that true academic excellence is incomplete without emotional resilience, ethical clarity, and inner balance.

Anandam's distinctiveness lies in its integrative model, which combines classical Indian wisdom with contemporary insights from psychology, neuroscience, and organizational studies. Unlike conventional wellness

programmes that remain peripheral to institutional life, Anandam is structurally embedded within the academic and administrative framework of IIM Jammu. Its programming includes mental health counselling, meditative practices, curricular innovation, faculty development, and community outreach—all designed to support the emotional, cognitive, physical, and ethical dimensions of the human experience. The Centre has ensured the accessibility of professional psychological services for students and staff, while also nurturing a shared culture of mindfulness through regular yoga sessions. These practices are not incidental but are strategically timed—particularly during examination periods and institutional milestones—to reinforce emotional composure and mental clarity.

Among Anandam's most impactful collaborations have been its partnerships with leading spiritual and wellness organizations such as the Art of Living Foundation, led by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and the Isha Foundation, under the guidance of Sadhguru. Through workshops and programmes developed in collaboration with these institutions, students have been introduced to practical tools like breathwork, meditation, reflective silence, and guided introspection. These sessions have helped students explore dimensions of self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and ethical leadership. The positive response—both in terms of participation and measurable outcomes—has led to the regular integration of these offerings within Anandam's calendar. These skill-building programmes are further complemented by academic courses on happiness studies, which draw upon classical Indian texts such as the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gītā, and Buddhist sūtras. Blended with contemporary theories of well-being, emotional intelligence, and purpose-driven living, these courses employ diverse pedagogical methods—ranging from journaling and group dialogue to community immersion and experiential learning.

The spirit of Anandam, however, is not confined to structured learning environments. It flows into the broader culture of the Institute through a range of commemorative and outreach initiatives that reflect its civilizational grounding. Events such as the International Day of Yoga, World Mental Health Day, and International Day of Happiness have been reimagined as opportunities for experiential

learning and ethical reflection. Through group satsang sessions, interactive discussions, and lectures by renowned scholars and practitioners, these occasions reinforce the idea of well-being as a shared, participatory endeavour. These efforts echo the foundational Indian view that *ananda* is not only an individual pursuit, but a way of being that radiates into and uplifts the collective.

A critical factor in the Centre's continued impact lies in the sustained, strategic engagement of its team, whose commitment to innovation and responsiveness drives the development and implementation of programmes that are both forward-thinking and deeply attuned to the evolving needs of the student population and the wider community. These initiatives are not only designed to enrich academic life but also to foster interdisciplinary dialogue, civic engagement, and personal growth. The Centre's diverse portfolio includes expert-led thematic lectures that bring contemporary issues into focus, academically rigorous seminars and conferences that encourage cross-disciplinary knowledge exchange, and immersive outdoor learning experiences that cultivate environmental literacy and a deeper sense of place. Additionally, structured opportunities for community-based engagement are embedded throughout, promoting inclusive participation and a shared commitment to social and ecological responsibility. What renders Anandam particularly significant in the landscape of Indian higher education is its role in bridging young minds with their own cultural and intellectual inheritance. Through its content, activities, and ethos, the Centre reconnects students to the Indian Knowledge System—a tradition not limited to metaphysical abstraction but encompassing holistic, practical, and sustainable approaches to life. It brings renewed relevance to classical insights on ethics, governance, creativity, health, and aesthetics, showing how Indian epistemologies can illuminate universal human concerns. Anandam's reframing of this heritage not as antiquity but as living, dynamic knowledge underscores its importance as a civilizational resource for contemporary education. In doing so, it offers a powerful counterpoint to the cultural dilution that often accompanies modern curricula and reasserts India's enduring contribution to global thought.

One of the significant areas in which

Anandam: The Centre for Happiness at IIM Jammu has begun its work is the development of its own context-specific Happiness Index. This initiative reflects a conscious departure from generic or externally imposed metrics, aiming instead to create a nuanced, culturally grounded, and empirically robust framework for assessing happiness. In parallel, Anandam is engaged in the systematic generation of primary data on a wide array of variables linked to subjective well-being, emotional resilience, social connectedness, life purpose, and other psychological and socio-cultural determinants of happiness.

The data thus collected is not merely instrumental—it forms the foundational bedrock for a larger research agenda that seeks to reposition happiness studies within mainstream academic discourse. Historically, research on happiness has remained somewhat peripheral to conventional scholarly inquiry, often overshadowed by more quantifiable economic or performance-driven paradigms. Anandam seeks to address this epistemic marginality by cultivating an indigenous knowledge base, encouraging interdisciplinary scholarship, and offering evidence-based insights that are both globally relevant and locally resonant.

The broader educational and developmental relevance of Anandam is further underscored by its alignment with national and international policy frameworks. By embodying the spirit of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020—which advocates for holistic, value-based, and learner-centred education—the Centre stands as a model for institutional transformation.

In essence, Anandam is not just a centre—it is a living philosophy embedded within the educational vision of IIM Jammu. It represents an evolving commitment to human-centric learning, one that draws equally from ancient Indian wisdom and contemporary pedagogical insight. By cultivating self-awareness, ethical clarity, and emotional resilience within and beyond the classroom, Anandam exemplifies what it means to educate the whole person. In doing so, it not only addresses a growing imperative in higher education but also sets a precedent for how institutions across India can meaningfully integrate well-being, values, and cultural rootedness into the fabric of academic life.

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The Crow in Hindu Mythology: A Symbol of Family Union and Ancestral Veneration

■ DR RAKESH VERMA

In the vast tapestry of Hindu mythology, the crow, often overlooked in favor of more majestic creatures, holds a significant place. Revered for its intelligence, adaptability, and perceived connection to the ancestral realm, the crow is interwoven into various Hindu beliefs, rituals, and festivals. This article delves into the multifaceted significance of the crow in Hindu culture, exploring its symbolic representation of family unity, its veneration during auspicious occasions, and the concerns surrounding its dwindling population in urbanized areas.

A Symbol of Family Union

One of the most compelling aspects of the crow's symbolism in Hinduism is its association with family unity. Crows are known for their social nature, often living in large, closely-knit communities. This behavior is interpreted as an indication of a united family system, where members support and care for one another. The crow's communal living is seen as a reflection of the ideal Hindu family, where harmony, cooperation, and mutual respect are highly valued. The belief that crows represent family unity is deeply ingrained in Hindu culture, influencing various customs and traditions. For instance, it is common for families to feed crows regularly, especially during festivals and auspicious occasions. This act is not merely seen as an offering of food but as a symbolic gesture of honoring family bonds and seeking blessings for the entire household. Moreover, the crow's association with family unity extends beyond the immediate family to include ancestors. In Hindu tradition, ancestors are considered an integral part of the family lineage, and their blessings are sought for the well-being and prosperity of the living. The crow is believed to be a messenger between the living and the ancestral realm, carrying offerings and prayers to the departed souls.

Veneration During Hindu Festivals and Rituals

The crow's veneration is particularly evident during Sharad, a period dedicated to honoring ancestors. During this time, Hindus perform rituals and make offerings to their deceased relatives, seeking their blessings and guidance. The crow plays a central role in these rituals, as it is believed to be the embodiment of the ancestors themselves. One of the most significant customs during Sharad is the offering of the first meal to a crow. It is believed that unless and until a crow tastes the offered food, the ancestors have not accepted the meal. Families eagerly await the arrival of a crow, and only after it has partaken of the food is the ritual considered complete. This practice underscores the deep-seated belief that crows are inter-



mediaries between the living and the dead, carrying the essence of the offerings to the ancestral realm. The tradition of offering the first meal to a crow is not limited to Sharad. It is also observed during congregations of various Hindu communities, where the first meal is offered to crows before being consumed by the attendees. This practice reinforces the crow's status as a symbol of ancestral presence and its role in ensuring the sanctity of the communal meal. The act of feeding crows during festivals and rituals is not merely a symbolic gesture but also an expression of gratitude and respect for the ancestors. It is believed that by honoring the ancestors through the crow, families can receive their blessings, which in turn bring prosperity, health, and happiness.

The Fading Crow Population in Urbanized Cities

While the crow continues to be venerated in many parts of India, its population is dwindling in urbanized cities. This decline is attributed to various factors, including habitat loss, pollution, and the increasing scarcity of food sources. As cities expand, natural habitats are destroyed, leaving crows with fewer places to nest and forage for food. The decline in the crow population is a cause for concern among many Hindus, who view it as a sign of diminishing respect

for tradition and a weakening connection to the ancestral realm. The scarcity of crows has made it increasingly difficult to perform rituals that require their presence, leading to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty among devout Hindus. The concern over the fading crow population is exemplified by the story of an old man who traveled kilometers to call a crow to accept the Sharad meal. This poignant anecdote highlights the deep-seated belief in the crow's significance and the lengths to which people will go to uphold traditional customs. The dwindling crow population in urbanized cities serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving natural habitats and promoting sustainable practices. It also underscores the need to raise awareness about the cultural significance of the crow and the role it plays in maintaining the integrity of Hindu traditions.

The Crow's Enduring Significance

Despite the challenges posed by urbanization and environmental degradation, the crow continues to hold a special place in Hindu mythology. Its association with family unity, ancestral veneration, and auspiciousness ensures its enduring significance in Hindu culture. The crow serves as a reminder of the importance of honoring family bonds, respecting ancestors, and preserving the natural world. As Hinduism continues to evolve and

adapt to changing times, the crow's symbolism may also undergo transformations. However, its core values of family unity, ancestral connection, and respect for nature will likely remain central to its representation. The crow's ability to adapt to different environments and its resourcefulness in finding food are qualities that resonate with the Hindu spirit of resilience and adaptability. In conclusion, the crow in Hindu mythology is more than just a bird; it is a symbol of family unity, ancestral veneration, and auspiciousness. Its presence in various Hindu rituals and festivals underscores its significance in the cultural and religious landscape of India. While the crow population faces challenges in urbanized cities, its enduring symbolism ensures its continued relevance in Hindu tradition. By understanding and appreciating the crow's significance, we can gain a deeper understanding of Hindu values and beliefs, and work towards preserving the natural world for future generations.

The Crow as a Divine Messenger

Beyond its association with ancestors and family unity, the crow is also considered a divine messenger in Hindu mythology. In some traditions, it is believed that the crow carries messages from the gods and goddesses to the human realm. This belief stems from the crow's ability to fly long distances and its

keen eyesight, which enables it to observe events from a high vantage point. The crow's role as a divine messenger is often depicted in Hindu folklore and legends. In some stories, crows are portrayed as spies of the gods, gathering information and reporting back to the divine realm. In other stories, crows are depicted as benevolent messengers, delivering warnings or blessings to humans. The belief that crows are divine messengers influences the way they are treated in Hindu society. Many Hindus refrain from harming crows, believing that doing so could invite the wrath of the gods. Instead, they often offer food and water to crows, hoping to receive a favorable message or blessing.

The Crow and Shani Dev

The crow is also closely associated with Shani Dev, the Hindu god of justice and karma. Shani Dev is often depicted riding a crow, which serves as his vehicle or mount. The crow's association with Shani Dev reinforces its symbolism of justice, fairness, and accountability. It is believed that Shani Dev uses the crow to observe the actions of humans and to deliver justice according to their karma. The crow's keen eyesight and its ability to detect hidden things make it an ideal vehicle for Shani Dev, who is known for his unwavering commitment to justice. The association

between the crow and Shani Dev has led to the practice of offering food to crows on Saturdays, which is considered the day of Shani Dev. By feeding crows on Saturdays, Hindus seek to appease Shani Dev and to receive his blessings for justice, fairness, and protection from negative karma.

The Crow in Hindu Art and Literature

The crow is a recurring motif in Hindu art and literature, often depicted in paintings, sculptures, and stories. In these representations, the crow is portrayed in various ways, reflecting its multifaceted symbolism. In some artworks, the crow is depicted as a messenger of the gods, carrying offerings or delivering messages to humans. In other artworks, the crow is depicted as a symbol of ancestral presence, representing the connection between the living and the dead. In Hindu literature, the crow is often portrayed as a wise and cunning creature, capable of solving problems and outwitting its adversaries. The crow's intelligence and adaptability are celebrated in many folk tales and fables, which teach valuable lessons about resourcefulness, perseverance, and the importance of family unity.

The Crow's Place in Contemporary Hindu Society

Despite the challenges posed by urbanization and environmental degradation, the crow continues to hold a special place in contemporary Hindu society. Its symbolism of family unity, ancestral veneration, and auspiciousness ensures its continued relevance in Hindu culture. Many Hindus continue to feed crows regularly, especially during festivals and auspicious occasions. This practice is not merely a symbolic gesture but also an expression of gratitude and respect for the ancestors. The crow's presence in Hindu art, literature, and folklore also ensures its continued relevance in contemporary society. The crow's stories and symbolism are passed down from generation to generation, reinforcing its cultural significance.

Preserving the Crow Population

The dwindling crow population in urbanized cities is a cause for concern among many Hindus. The loss of natural habitats and the increasing scarcity of food sources have made it difficult for crows to survive in urban environments. To address this issue, various initiatives have been launched to preserve the crow population. These initiatives include planting trees and creating green spaces in urban areas, providing food and water for crows, and raising awareness about the cultural significance of the crow. By preserving the crow population, we can ensure that future generations will continue to appreciate its symbolism and its role in maintaining the integrity of Hindu traditions.