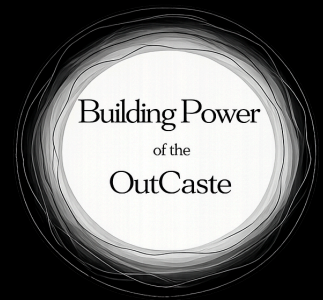


Building Power of the OutCaste



NextGen Rights Lab Module Workbook

Academia, Knowledge & Intergenerational Leadership from the Edges

(For Gen Z & Millennial Intergenerational Leaders from Caste-Affected & Minority Communities)

1. How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is a self-guide for the module:

- "Academia, Knowledge & Intergenerational Leadership from the Edges" (Academia – global and regional – with respect to intergenerational leadership for caste-affected groups and minority rights)

It is written for:

- people from caste-affected communities,
- people from minority groups (religious, ethnic, linguistic, gender/sexual minorities, migrants, refugees, stateless communities),
- first-generation learners, scholars, students, researchers, teachers,
- and allies who want to challenge how knowledge is produced, owned, and used.

What this workbook will do:

- Help you see academia and education as sites of power, not just "temples of learning".
- Show how caste, race, class, gender, religion, and language shape who gets to be "smart", "neutral", or "objective".
- Introduce key ideas around knowledge justice, citation politics, decolonising curricula, and community-rooted research.
- Offer concrete exercises to map your own educational journey, audit syllabi, and think about safer, more just research practices.
- Support you to imagine yourself as a knowledge producer – not only a subject of other people's research.

What it will not do:

- It will not pretend universities or schools are neutral.
- It will not suggest that only people with degrees are "experts".

- It will not give you a perfect theory of decolonising academia.

Think of it as:

- a small compass to navigate classrooms, conferences, journals, archives, fellowships,
- a reminder that your community's knowledge is real and valuable,
- and an invitation to build bridges between "formal" and "street" knowledge.

Use a notebook or digital doc to write your answers. The real work happens in your reflections, not just in reading.

2. Module Overview

Module title used in sessions: Academia, Knowledge & Intergenerational Leadership from the Edges

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Describe how academia and education systems in your context have included and excluded caste-affected and minority communities.
- Identify who is treated as a "legitimate knower" and who is treated as "data" or "case study material".
- Notice patterns of dominance in syllabi, citations, faculty, admission, and evaluation.
- Understand basic principles of knowledge justice: representation, authorship, consent, access, and accountability.
- Reflect on your own position as a student, researcher, practitioner, teacher, or organiser in relation to academic spaces.
- Think through safer and more ethical ways of doing research and documentation with your communities.
- Commit to at least one concrete practice to shift how you learn, teach, write, or share knowledge.

This workbook is for people inside and outside formal academia. You do not have to be enrolled in a university. You do have to be willing to question what you were taught about "merit" and "objectivity".

3. Why Academia Matters for Caste & Minority Justice

Universities, colleges, and schools are often described as:

- places of "merit",
- spaces of "rational debate",
- engines of "social mobility".

For many caste-affected and minority communities, they are also:

- sites of humiliation and exclusion,
- places where languages, histories, and bodies are disciplined,
- gatekeepers for jobs, visas, influence, and legitimacy.

Academia matters because:

- It shapes what is considered "true", "scientific", or "evidence-based".
- It trains judges, bureaucrats, journalists, planners, tech workers, teachers, and NGO staff.
- It decides which histories, struggles, and thinkers are taught – and which are erased.
- It produces concepts that get used in policies, court judgments, and development projects.

From the edges, we ask:

- Whose knowledge enters the classroom, and whose knowledge stays outside?
 - Who is allowed to fail and still be seen as promising? Who is destroyed by one failure?
 - Who gets to research whom? Who is always being researched?
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4. Exercise 1 – My Education & Knowledge Journey (20–25 mins)

Take a page and title it: "My education and knowledge journey"

Answer the following, in any order:

- What kinds of educational spaces have you moved through? – government school, private school, madrasa, gurukul, monastery, college, university, vocational training, open learning, online courses, informal community learning... – Write a short timeline with key places and turning points.
- In these spaces, when did you feel: – most seen and respected? – most invisible, humiliated, or out of place?
- Were you treated as: – the "good student", – the "quota student", – the "angry activist", – the "exotic minority", – the "weak student", – the "star achiever from a poor background", – or something else? Describe in your own words.
- Who did you learn the most from (inside or outside classrooms)? – family members, workers, elders, books, social media, movements, mentors?

Spend 5–8 lines reflecting:

- When I look at my journey, what does it teach me about how knowledge and merit are defined in my context?
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5. Who Counts as an "Expert"?

In academic and policy spaces, you will often see:

- professors with many degrees,
- researchers with international fellowships,
- consultants with global experience,
- think tank people with English fluency and graphs,
- activists or community leaders invited to "share their story" for 10 minutes at the end.

We ask:

- Whose voice is treated as "data"?

- Whose voice is treated as "analysis"?
- Who gets cited? Who gets thanked in footnotes without credit or payment?
- Who receives travel, honoraria, and long-term opportunities?

Expertise can come from:

- lived experience and long-term organising,
- practice-based knowledge (lawyers, counsellors, community health workers, frontline staff),
- academic and professional training,
- community archives, oral histories, and memory.

Knowledge justice means refusing the idea that only those with certain passports or degrees are "neutral" or "smart", and everyone else is "biased" or "emotional".

6. Exercise 2 – Panel or Classroom Power Map (20 mins)

Think of one event or space you know well where knowledge was being shared. For example:

- a university class,
- a conference panel,
- an NGO "multi-stakeholder" meeting,
- an expert roundtable,
- a webinar or online panel.

On a page, draw three concentric circles:

- Inner circle: speakers/teachers/facilitators
- Middle circle: active participants (who asked questions, spoke up)
- Outer circle: silent participants, staff, note-takers, interpreters, technical support

Now, for each circle, answer:

- Who was in this circle in terms of caste, gender, religion, class, age, language, disability, nationality (as far as you could see/guess)?
- Who controlled time and agenda?
- Who was positioned as "expert"?
- Who was doing invisible labour (logistics, translation, emotional support, note-taking)?

Then, in 4–6 lines, reflect:

- If this was supposed to be a space about justice or rights, what felt out of alignment?
 - If you could redesign this space to honour knowledge from the edges, what would be one concrete change?
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7. Syllabi, Citations & the Politics of What We Read

What we read in schools and universities is not neutral. Syllabi often:

- privilege dominant-caste, male, Global North authors,

- treat Western thinkers as "theory" and Global South or marginalised thinkers as "case studies",
- ignore Dalit, Adivasi, Indigenous, Black, Muslim, queer, disabled, and working-class thinkers, or confine them to one token week,
- present caste, racism, and patriarchy as "social issues" but rarely as central to law, economics, technology, or environment.

Citation politics:

- Who do we quote?
- Whose work do we treat as foundational?
- Who we cite shapes careers, funding, and legitimacy.

For caste-affected and minority leaders, shifting syllabi and citation practices is part of structural change – not cosmetic diversity.

8. Exercise 3 – Mini Syllabus Audit (25–30 mins)

Choose one course or reading list you know. It could be:

- a law or social science course,
- a development studies or human rights course,
- a media, tech, or policy course,
- or even a training curriculum in an NGO/fellowship.

If you don't have a syllabus, list the last 6–10 readings you engaged with in any organised learning space.

Look at the list and answer:

- **Who are the authors in terms of region and location?** – Mostly Global North? Mostly metropolitan elites? Any authors from your region, caste, or community?
 - **Gender and caste/race/ethnicity (as far as you can tell):** Are the authors mostly men from dominant groups? Are Dalit, Adivasi, Indigenous, Black, Muslim, queer, disabled, or women and gender-diverse authors present?
 - **Topics:** Are caste, race, religion, gender, disability, migration treated as side issues or central to the subject?
 - **Missing voices:** Name at least three types of voices that are missing. (For example: Dalit feminist thinkers, queer Muslim scholars, Indigenous environmental scholars, worker-writer-union leaders.)
 - **Rewrite one week of the syllabus:** Choose a topic and suggest 2–3 alternative readings, podcasts, lectures, or films that you think should be included to make the course more just and representative.
 - **Write 4–6 lines on how it would feel to see thinkers from your own communities treated as core, not optional.**
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9. Research from the Edges: Ethics, Consent & Extraction

Many of us – and our communities – have been "researched" over and over:

- surveyed, interviewed, photographed,
- written about in reports we never see,
- used as "cases" in papers and conferences,
- sometimes misrepresented or stripped of context.

As you grow in your leadership, you may become a researcher yourself, or collaborate with researchers.

Knowledge justice in research means:

- informed consent that is understandable and meaningful,
- clarity about how data will be stored, shared, published,
- options to remain anonymous or be named,
- fair recognition and, where possible, compensation,
- returning findings to communities in accessible ways,
- avoiding traumatising and endless extraction of painful stories,
- understanding power differences between researcher and researched.

It also means asking whether a study should be done at all, and who truly benefits from it.

10. Exercise 4 – Research Ethics from Below (20–25 mins)

Imagine that you are designing a research project on an issue you care about. For example:

- caste discrimination in higher education,
- surveillance of minority communities,
- climate change and forced migration,
- gig work and exploitation,
- policing of queer and trans youth,
- language discrimination in schools.

Answer:

1. Who would be the main people you want to talk to or learn from?

2. What are three potential harms that could arise for them if your research is careless or badly handled?

3. What are three potential benefits – for them and/or for the wider community?

4. Write five ethical principles that will guide your research. For example:

- "No one is obliged to share their trauma with me."
- "I will not record or share identifiable details without explicit consent."
- "I will share a summary of my findings in the local language and in an accessible format."
- "I will not publish anything that could expose people to backlash without their fully informed agreement."
- "I will ensure people can withdraw from the study at any time."

- Finally, write 3–4 lines on how your own identity (caste, gender, religion, class, age) shapes your responsibility in this research.
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11. Intergenerational Academic & Knowledge Leadership

Knowledge work is also intergenerational:

Elders:

- have long memories of student movements, syllabus battles, campus struggles, and crackdowns,
- may be in positions of power in faculties, editorial boards, councils,
- may also be cautious, overworked, or stuck in institutional politics.

Mid-career scholars and practitioners:

- often juggle teaching, publishing, families, activism, and administration,
- may feel trapped between wanting to change things and needing to survive in hostile institutions.

Younger scholars and students (Gen Z & young millennials):

- bring sharp intersectional critiques,
- are fluent in digital tools, open-access knowledge, online seminars, podcasts, and zines,
- may be more precarious in terms of fees, visas, hostel access, and financial support,
- ace mental health strains in hostile campuses.

Intergenerational knowledge leadership asks:

- How can we honour elders who opened doors, while criticising where necessary?
 - How can mid-career people use their positions to protect and promote first-generation, Dalit, Adivasi, Indigenous, Muslim, queer, disabled scholars?
 - How can younger people build their own platforms and networks without burning out or reproducing the same hierarchies?
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12. Exercise 5 – My Knowledge Allies & Lineages (20 mins)

Answer the following:

1. Name (or describe) three elder figures whose knowledge has shaped you.

- They can be teachers, writers, poets, activists, family members, or community elders.
- For each, write one thing you learned from them about how to think, feel, or act.

2. Name three peers whose thinking challenges and supports you right now.

- For each, write one sentence: "They help me grow because..."

3. Name at least two younger people (students, siblings, community kids, junior colleagues) whose questions or practices keep you accountable.

- **For each, complete the sentence: "I want my knowledge work to be accountable to them by..."**

Now answer in 4–6 lines:

- **If I imagine my knowledge work as part of a lineage – past, present, and future – what kind of ancestor do I want to become for younger caste-affected and minority scholars and activists?**
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13. From Gatekeeping to Building New Spaces

Academia has many gates:

- **entrance exams,**
- **language barriers,**
- **high fees,**
- **complex forms and documentation,**
- **informal networks of recommendation,**
- **hostile campus cultures.**

But knowledge also lives in:

- **community libraries and archives,**
- **reading circles and study groups,**
- **podcasts, YouTube channels, blogs, zines,**
- **local museums, cultural centres, and street art,**
- **union meetings and community gatherings.**

As an intergenerational leader from the edges, your work can include:

- **entering formal institutions and surviving them without losing your politics,**
- **pushing for more just admissions, scholarships, hiring, and syllabi,**
- **building parallel spaces of learning and knowledge-sharing outside universities,**
- **connecting local knowledge to global debates on rights, climate, tech, labour, and democracy.**

You do not have to choose only one path. Many people weave in and out of academia while staying rooted in their communities.

14. Exercise 6 – Designing a Small Justice-Oriented Learning Space (25–30 mins)

Imagine you had the resources to run a small learning space for 6 months for people from your community or networks. It could be:

- **a reading and discussion circle,**
- **a weekend school,**

- an online study group,
- a mixed-format (online/offline) fellowship for a few participants.

Answer:

1. Who would it be for? (age range, community, background)
 2. What would be its main focus? (for example: caste and law, climate and labour, digital rights, language and memory, Dalit and Indigenous feminist thought)
 3. What formats would you use? (reading discussions, film screenings, guest talks, writing labs, creative workshops, field visits)
 4. How would you make sure:
 - people from marginalised backgrounds feel safe and seen,
 - no one is shamed for not knowing English or jargon,
 - knowledge flows in multiple directions (not just "teacher to student"),
 - accessibility needs are considered (timings, transport, disability, childcare)?
 - Finally, write 5–8 lines on how this space would be different from most formal academic spaces you know.
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15. Final Commitment Exercise – Your Knowledge Practice Shift (20–25 mins)

- This module is not asking you to become a professor or leave academia entirely. It is asking you to make one clear shift in how you relate to knowledge, learning, and teaching.

Take a quiet moment.

1. Look back at your notes from this workbook. Underline or highlight anything where you felt: "This is exactly my experience" or "I want to do this differently in my learning/teaching/writing."
2. On a fresh page, write:
 - "From this academia module, one practice I will change or adopt in my work is..."

3. Now write at least 8–10 lines describing:

What this practice is.

- Why it matters for you and your community.
- Where you will apply it (classroom, campus, online spaces, community library, collective, workplace training, content creation).
- What might make it hard (fear of professors, institutional rules, time, money, confidence).
- One or two things you can do to support yourself (finding allies, joining study circles, setting aside reading/writing time, mentoring someone, asking for mentorship).

Examples:

- "I will start a small reading circle centred on Dalit, Adivasi, Indigenous, Black, and minority thinkers in my city or online."

- "I will consciously cite and amplify scholars from my communities in my assignments, reports, and content."
- "I will push back against casteist or racist comments in classrooms or seminars, even if only by naming them and asking a question."
- "I will treat my family and community knowledge as legitimate, and look for ways to document it respectfully."
- If it feels safe, share this commitment with one person you trust – a friend, peer, mentor, or younger person – and ask them to check in with you in 3–6 months.

Keep this page. This is your anchor for doing knowledge work from the edges – as a learner, teacher, researcher, and storyteller committed to caste and minority justice.
