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From the Editor's Desk:

This volume spans an exhaustive range of literary, social, cultural and scientific issues. It begins by harkening back to our primitive past through ancient epics. Then it moves through contemporary India dealing with casteism, national conflicts, gendered violence. Global literature is also discussed. Two scientific articles link together disparate realms as cyberspace and biology. The reader is sure to find himself enriched in many spheres.

Dr. Tapu Biswas takes up the fascinating topic of Mother-Right as found in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Epics evolve over time containing in them the pre-history of the nation with traces of ancient customs and social systems. One such practice is that of mother-right. In *Mahabharata* inheritance of the throne flows not through the paternal line but through the younger sons of the female line of queens – thus society then practiced matrilineal system. *Ramayana* too shows the prevalence of this practice through Dasarath's impotence – children of the queens, rather than the king, inherit the kingdom. Even among the gods Indra is frequently deposed but Sachi remains fixed in the position as Queen of Heaven. Dr. Biswas convincingly demonstrates that *Mahabharata* is the older while *Ramayana* shows a power struggle between matriarchal and emerging patriarchal systems.

Birender Singh discusses how Dalit autobiographies show the cultural conflicts between the marginalized Dalit society and dominant society. For example Dalits eat meat which is reviled by others. But poverty is also a factor since such options are cheap and available as upper castes don't want it. They also had to follow dress codes violating which was considered an offence to upper castes. Similarly Dalit rituals and deities are also on the fringes. Widow remarriage and polyandry are also to be found in these castes. The autobiographies document these clashes. Singh suggests that that Dalit culture should be assimilated by varna Hindus to become more popular and global.

N. Banita Devi demonstrates how Anita Desai in her novel *Fasting, Feasting* deals with the issue of female victimization by various patriarchal strategies. In the novel we see the father of the female protagonist forces the mother to continue a dangerous pregnancy just in hopes of getting a son. When she finally delivered one the mother is greatly happy. Thus patriarchy controls women's bodies and brainwashes women to accepting the superiority of males. The protagonist is denied any choice in her life and all her parents can think is getting her married. Her humiliation when the groom runs away with her dowry is not considered important; what matters is that an unmarried daughter is a disgrace. As Banita Devi points out even the title of the novel implies gender discrimination.

Dr. Shibani Chakraverty Aich studies 13 short stories from Volume II of *Best Indian Short Stories* anthologized by Khushwant Singh. These stories depict societal and humanitarian problems in post-independent India. Many stories focus on sexual and other physical violence against women including minors, and question the corrupt legal and social system that allow such brutality. Others focus on the equally corrupt politicians, on riots engineered for political profits, on greed for money dominating everyone. Dr. Chakraverty argues that all stories reflect the moral degeneration of society and proper education is the only panacea.

Gennia Nuh critically analyses the problematic response evoked in the audience by Pulitzer-winner Ayad Akhtar's play *Disgraced*. The play focuses on two inter-racial couples. Set in post-9/11 America, the audience is left to grapple with the superficiality of tolerance, prevalent stereotypes, American-ness and the right to construct one's own identity. The audience is confronted with the discomfort that results on realizing their own hypocrisy. The play forces the audience to question if identity is inherited or performed, and the privilege to one's own identity formation.

Dr. Saibal Sankar Chakraborty and **Dr. Ram Darshan** take a multipronged approach to analyzing populist movements. Populism is a movement that speaks for the common people but always is centred round a political ideology. Economic inequality, backlash against globalization, distrust in existing institutions, fear of losing cultural identity, all are components of such movements. The rise of such movements are harmful and development of civil society is needed to counter them. Their research paper stress the need to understand the underlying causes of populist movement and foster democratic values.

Priyanka Chakdar studies the reflection of contemporary society in selected texts by Vijay Tendulkar. In most of his plays the power dynamics between gender is shown to be oppressive to women with men crushing them in various ways. In *Kanyadaan* the Dalit husband tortures his Brahmin wife because he could not free himself of the memory of his Brahmins had oppressed his community. So the wife becomes an outlet of his rage. Again *Kamala* is about exploitation of poor women and that legally married wives are considered to be slaves of their husbands. Chakdar brings out Tendulkar's subtle undertext that the outward show of liberalism hides oppression of women.

Thokchom Linthoingambi Chanu analyses the function of memory in What the Body Remembers, a novel on the gendered violence during Partition of India. The story centres round what the female character remembers about being a woman, brought up amidst restrictions; memory makes her obey the patriarchal code. Memory also becomes a driving engine for communities to draw courage and remember aggression inflicted on them in the past. Yet memory can become a tool of resistance as women speak out what their bodies had endured. Chanu points out that in the novel memory both constructs and deconstructs identity and remembering the gendered violence of partition and acknowledging it is one way of moving forward to a brighter future.

Phurailatpam Nandakumar Sharma looks at selected poems of Margret Atwood from ecological viewpoint. In her poems nature is beautiful and diverse. But man is always violent since they have an anthropocentric mentality. They try to dominate nature and so kills and destroys. Particularly her 'Snake poems' show how the snakes are killed needlessly and even consumed. Yet ultimately man's attempt to dominate nature is futile. Sharma observes that though Atwood provides no solution to the conflict between man and nature, she provides a platform through her poetry reminding man that he is a part of nature and harmony is the only way to preserve his own dying world.

Dr. Prosenjit Saha takes up the highly contemporary issue of cybercrime. Nowadays civilization is highly technological, particularly Information Technology dependant. Yet we also know that cybercrimes have risen in the past few years defrauding citizens and putting national security at risk. Saha gives us a detailed survey of growth of internet in India, cybercrime profiles, laws regulating the internet and safety measures

recommended to keep one's data and money safe. This is a very informative and useful article.

Dr. Babli Halder ventures into the field of biology. She presents in detail the cultivation of freshwater prawn which is a major source of protein. However the use of insecticide like Fenvalerate is harmful. The paper presents her research on the detrimental effect it has on DNA of the prawns. It is a thoroughly scientific paper and offers some fresh material, like the prawns!

Paloma Chaterji discusses the quest for identity in Easterine Kire's novels, *Bitter Wormwood* and *A Terrible Matriarchy*. The first book details the trials and conflicts of Nagas as many of them try to get a separate homeland independent from India but fail to do so. Yet the identity of Nagas as Indian citizens continue to be questioned by mainstream Indians. The second book speaks about gendered discrimination in Naga society. Men always are given a space of their own while women have to continuously struggle to get their own space and transform it into a home. Their work is assigned no value. Chaterji analyses how the world of Naga society with all its complexities and conflicts come out through the child protagonists' growth into adulthood.

Dr. Shirshendu Basu compares the religious poems written by Philip Larkin and Arun Kolatkar. Both of them engage with their national religious identity but their perspectives are divergent. In his poems Larkin depicts the decline of faith in England and that the Church has become a shell only without substance. Kolatkar's poem also depicts a ruined temple that no worshippers visit, but he states with full conviction that this is a house of God. He speaks of images of gods in darkness and lumps of stone worshipped as deities that will help you. While Larkin's poems bid farewell to religion Kolatkar's poems speak of a faith that is unshakable.

Jagori Mukherjee's paper is on Rajorshi Patronobi's four volumes of poems. They are love poems but each collection uses different formats. Mukherjee focuses on their differing styles and how the content is present in various cultural contexts.

Riya Ghosh studies Ruskin Bond's short stories in in the *Small Towns, Big Stories* collection in the light of Erik H. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. These stories cover all stages of development from childhood to old age in individuals. They show how human beings develop over the

From the Editorial Desk

years. Gosh points out that Bond's stories are always with joy at life and the developments portrayed fit in with Erikson's theory of Lifecycle.

Sudesna Som scrutinizes the environmental vision of John Kinsella. His poems explore the most pressing issue of our times – how men have exploited the natural environment degrading it to the point of no-return and thereby also destroyed vulnerable people. In particular he shows how white settlers have destroyed both ecology and native human communities. Som brings out how the poet also shows the way to co-existence of human and non-human communities.

IJCSS occasionally publishes unpublished verses or short fiction from various parts of the globe. We close this issue with a short poem "Hope" composed by Pradeep Chatterjee.

Happy Reading

Amitava Roy & Papia Mitra

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- Tapu Biswas, M.A, MPhil, Ph.D, D.Litt. is currently Associate Professor, Teacher-in-Charge, Department of English, & Vice-Principal, Bhasha Bhavana Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India. Dr Biswas was formerly the Assistant Registrar of Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He is honorary Jt. Secretary, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. He is today the Hony. Secretary of the Tagore Gandhi Institute for Culture Studies and Service –Learning (both are Govt. Registered educational and Cultural Society). He is a Recipient of UGC Research Award Post Doctoral Fellowship 2014-15. He is also the recipient of International Mother Teresa International Award 2021.
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- 18. **Pradeep Chatterjee** is a Mechanical Engineer from IIT-Kharagpur (1975 Batch). He has retired from Tata Motors after 30 years of service and is presently occupied in coaching Cambridge A-Level students in Physics and Mathematics. His endeavor is to bridge the gap between the "Two Cultures—that of Engineering Science and Poetry and Literature. From an early age he immersed himself in Literature and started composing and recording his poems from 1975.

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Amitava Roy is currently Director, Shakespeare Centre for Advanced Research, Rabindra Bharati University. Former Shakespeare Professor in English, Rabindra Bharati University. President, Shakespeare Society of Eastern India. Author and Editor of over fifteen books and three hundred articles and papers in national and international journals and newspapers. Globally renowned Theatre Director and Actor.

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Late Günter Grass (Germany), Founder Advisor, Tagore-Gandhi Institute, Nobel Laureate in Literature

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