

## Editorial

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken"

The current issue of *Summerhill: IAS Review* has articles that deal with concerns that are in many ways central to a liberal society built upon a spirit of freedom to choose alternatives. Exercising the right choice is very often an ethical dilemma. Gandhi offered a guide to the perplexed: 'I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away.'

The lead article by Peter deSouza argues for the rejection of a culture of abandoning one's principles 'when the price is right.' He gives three episodes of ethical firmness that became the turning points of contemporary history: Gandhi's last fast undertaken to bring about fraternization between Hindus and Muslims in the aftermath of partition violence; Nelson Mandela's release from a long incarceration when he showed no trace of bitterness against the apartheid regime which had locked him up in prison for a good part of his life, Aung San Suu Kyi's refusal to go to England to see her husband who was terminally ill, fearing that she might not be allowed to return to her country to continue her pro-democracy movement. Humanism after all is not a passive devotion to human interests but an active intervention in the social domain.

Frank Stewart in his paper maintains that there are times when, if one has to reclaim one's humanity, one

has to dethrone the false gods of one's own creation. Most certainly what needs to be repudiated is nationalism, the way Tagore did. What one really needs is ethical imagination.

Harish Trivedi reflects on literature, society and the human condition citing Martin Carter, V. S. Naipaul, W. B. Yeats and W. H. Auden. Does poetry, or for that matter literature, makes things happen? The response to such a question depends not on one's access to empirical realities but with the way one chooses to conceptualise the world. The question relates to the central ideas of literature and social change. Poetry, which often follows no teleological destination, provides its own justification. Literature and society is also the theme of Ananta Kumar Giri's paper which discusses the role of literature in creating the public sphere. Annie Montaut in her paper takes a look at the poetics and stylistics of Nirmal Verma, reading his fiction against the grain of postmodernist market hegemony.

On a different note Tiplut Nongbri writes about the marginalisation of women in India's Northeast, urging a greater sensitivity towards the conditions of those living on the margins of the homogenising space of a centralised nation-state.

Our postcolonial globalized world is no longer framed by explicit binaries such as the 'colonizer' and the 'colonized' but by nebulous sets of contrasts. It is in this context that Maninder Pal Kaur Sidhu finds that it is the anti-essentialism of the thought of Edward Said that marks him out for his universalism.

I hope the readers will enjoy the range of topics offered in this issue of *Summerhill* as much as I have enjoyed putting the articles together.

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