

Note from the Editor

Aditya Pratap Deo

This issue of *Summerhill* has been delayed much beyond its scheduled publication date; and has passed through the desks of several editors before coming to mine. It is thus a somewhat incongruous collection of essays derived from the different phases of its making. But though it lacks a unity of theme, hopefully, it makes up for it with the diversity and vitality of its contributions.

The theme around which its original set of contributions was based was literary criticism: now this section, with some addition, is christened *From the World of Literature*. The first piece – *Do You Understand me?: The Culture of Translation in India* – is by the noted poet and scholar K. Satchidanandan, who offers a brief meditation on the history and state of translation in the Indian subcontinent. First pointing out the unique qualities of the traditions of translation in pre-colonial times, including that of creative re-readings as well as ‘vertical translation’, he moves on to track the changes in translation practices in the colonial and post-colonial periods, and ends with an analysis of the challenges facing this critical art today, especially when translation, as conversation between cultures, is the need of our times.

In *Mystical, Magical, Maverick Mira: The Poetics of Dissent*, Paritosh Chandra Dugar attempts to resurrect a ‘poetics of dissent’ through an exploration of the ‘metaphysics, aesthetics and ethics’ of the extraordinary medieval poet and *bhakta* Mira, with a careful and perceptive reading of her poetry. Dugar takes us on a fascinating journey into Mira’s world, where she boldly reinterprets – in her devotion to Krishna and in transgression of the patriarchal strictures of matrimonial duty – the idea of love. In an imaginative use of the analytic of *rasa* in understanding her poetry, Dugar argues that Mira’s love for her deity, sensual and emotional as it was, helped her invert the normative ‘impure’ into the liberating ‘pure’. At the end, this essay foregrounds Mira’s very life, lived with freedom of conscience, as resistance to power.

Albeena Shakil’s *Locating the ‘Northeast’: Global, National, Regional and Local Novels of Siddhartha Deb*,

Mamang Dai and Anjum Hasan, as the title suggests, introduces us to the less known but significant English language fiction from the Northeast. Through a study of three novelists, Siddhartha Deb, Mamang Dai and Anjum Hasan, Shakil looks at the themes of identity and belonging, local and global, region and nation, personal and collective, that shape their complex, fragmented and crisis-ridden imaginaries. In our intensely here yet intensely nowhere world, the marginal location of the Northeast, and the multiple alienations that it is suffused with, provide its Anglophone writers with a peculiar if also poignant vantage from which to engage with issues that mark the human condition in general today.

In *‘Frames of Return’: Sādhanā of Vārtā*, Aditya Chaturvedi attempts an *emic* reading of a Vaishnava text from the *Puṣṭimārga bhakti* tradition which began with Vallabhacharya in the 16th century and has continued in our times. The writer argues that modernist ways of reading texts that were composed in the pre-modern period and are part of living (often oral), non-Western literary traditions, limit our understanding of the true sense contained within. Chaturvedi then creatively uses Aurobindo’s idea of spiritual discipline and practice to decode the ‘secret’ meanings infusing the text in question. We learn that the other-worldly, that which is before and beyond language, is often critical for the practice of language and literature.

In the next section, titled *For Our Times*, in a stand-alone piece *Teacher as Mandala: Faith, Beauty and Knowing in Times of N/Rationalism*, Rizio Yohannan Raj offers us a deeply thought-provoking vision of a world beyond the stultifying order of n/rationalizing regimes, and in the embrace of trans-local, organic ‘unorder’, where ‘true reason’/ ‘faith’ leads us to the knowledge of the beautiful complex/complex beauty of life and nature, plural and unfettered. In Raj’s view, the critical, creative, libertarian and enlightened leader is the figure who negotiates this passage from death to resurrection.

In *Satire*, we move to Martin Kämpchen’s *Who is in*

charge of Rashtrapati Niwas?: Three Stories, where the writer follows the mice that scamper about in the old Vice-regal Lodge (rechristened Rashtrapati Niwas, now housing the IAS), tracks the monkeys that trapeze all over its roofs and gardens, and marvels at the flagpole that stands erect at the top, asking who really rules the roost in this grand, venerable but somewhat crumbling monolith. Through satirical observations of the dynamics of the Lodge and its denizens, animals and humans alike, Kämpchen weaves together tales that will at once regale, with wit, those who have lived, worked and visited here, and make them think seriously about the meaning of things beyond the visible and given.

The last section comprises reviews of three books, one strictly academic and the other two straddling the popular and the scholarly. Monika Saxena reads *Looking Within Looking Without* (edited by Kumkum Roy) to explore a work that brings together, in a welcome if tad belated move, essays on the neglected histories of the household in the Indian subcontinent. Tarinee Awasthi reviews Andrea Jain's *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture*, a book that traces the journey of Yoga

in the West, in the process raising questions about the nature of religion/culture, cultural consumption, and the phenomena of tradition and its transformation. In his comment on Pallavi Aiyer's *Smoke and Mirrors: An Experience of China*, Aditya Pratap Deo recommends a book that seeks to understand Indian approaches to and anxieties about the Chinese miracle; and provides a humane ethnographic account of the momentous economic, socio-cultural and political transformations that constitute this miracle.

My own time as a Fellow at IAS came six months after the scheduled, original date for this volume. As a Fellow, I observed that notwithstanding delays of this kind, caused by the somewhat erratic ebb and flow of life at IAS, its basic rhythms remain undisturbed. I am grateful to Prof. K. Satchidanandan (National Fellow), Prof. Chetan Singh (Director, 2013-16), Prof. A.K. Chaturvedi (Director, 2017-18), Shri Prem Chand (Librarian), and Sangeetaji and Ravi Ranjanji at the Publication Section, for their help and support. I hope that the IAS continues to support sound scholarship and critical publications.