

INTRODUCTION:

This is a curious time we are living in. When in the last decades of the 20th century the world witnessed a spectacle of a Wall being hammered down, the second decade of the 21st is in trepidation of another one being built. If the globalised world, had brought with it a promise of fluid borders and notions of belonging, along with new theories and terms like 'transnation' and 'postglobal', the last few years have somehow curbed our enthusiasm and brought back ghosts of the past. Rolling back the years, when one bet their dimes in essentialist ideas of race, ethnicity and nationalism, world politics has seen the emergence of neo-nationalists and fascist groups fighting to prove the superiority of their Gods, countries and races. In the process, there has been a constant threat to minority communities, with refugee crisis swelling and constant conflicts have lead to a systematic ethnic cleansing, in Africa, the Middle East and allegedly even in Burma. Such acts of ethnic cleansing, lead to an erasure of history and culture, creating a void in societal and political time, only to be replaced by the more acceptable and official versions of history and events. And under the dominant glare of meta-narratives, little, seldom reported and constantly under threat "stories" live, grapple and fight nervously for auditors. One might argue, that in today's world, where most of our lives are lived and recorded on social media, be it Facebook, Instagram or B(V)logs, nothing is lost, nothing is beyond recovery or unarchiveable. Yet reading and dealing with such issues, one cannot help but be bitten with pessimism and fear. Jhumpa Lahiri in *The Lowland*, talks about the Naxal movement and remarks that when the female protagonist, tries to 'google' out reports of the so

many 'disappearances' at the hands of the State Police, she draws a complete blank. It is then that we realise that in the war between private and personal narratives, between the local and the official, some stories remain unrecorded, untranslatable and even worse, untraceable.

In the current issue of Postcolonial Interventions, we try to look into these issues and more. We have Esra Santesso talking about the difficulties of fitting in and belonging as a Turkish in European soil (more specifically German, for she has Fatih Akin's film *Head On* as her case study) and the perceptive and incisive analysis uncovers certain pointers which generally get lost in the conflict of belonging for the migrant worker or refugee. On one hand, we have the memories of a long lost home and a desire to preserve one's memory of it and their native culture, and on the other, the possibility of belonging and self- fashioning in the more liberal West. The refugee/ migrant labourer is constantly shuttling between these two islands, never fully accepted in either without a sense of guilt or shame.

Stories need to be told, re-told and circulated, lest we forget. And as Milan Kundera had remarked so many years ago, that the most crucial and poignant struggle is between power and memory. Ayesha Begum talks of the plight of the people of Palestine in her paper, something that has been in the news in recent times, troubling us with the reported atrocities and images of helpless civilians fleeing and cowering in ravaged buildings. A similar issue is dealt with by Claire Gallien in her in- depth analysis of Larissa Sansour's and Wael Shawky's Artwork. Gallien's sharp insights open up new avenues of thought, stimulating us, and making us question certain taken for granted ideas and assumptions.

Natasa Thoudam in her article looks at issues closer to home. For years, the North East of India has complained of a step-

fatherly treatment from the Indian Government, leading to a clamour for self-determination and the imposition of the draconian AFPSA, which gives the Indian Army almost carte blanche to search, interrogate, arrest and torture without a warrant. As a predictable outcome, reports have surfaced of human rights abuse, reports that have been hushed up and dismissed by the Central Government. Thoudam's analysis brings under the scanner the assault, alleged rape and death of a Manipuri civilian at the hands of the Indian Army on the pretext (?) of her being a terrorist and part of an insurgency group. The struggle is not only between two political factions as it were, it is between memories, lived and imposed.

The threat to minorities is not merely based on the twin axis of race and ethnicities but as Kapil Sharma shows in his analysis of the plight of the queer community in India, it is also entwined with gender and sexuality. The LGBTQ community and a significant portion of the civil urban society have been voicing their support for the withdrawal of the Article 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalises homosexuality. As the article tries to highlight, the assumption that homosexuality is a Western import is a hollow one, which tries to erase a long standing and often pictorial documentation of the presence and practice of same-sex love. What this does, is to replace the multicultural past and history of a land, by a more essentialist, totalising and homogenised version of it, for the benefits of a neo-liberal, fascist and hegemonic regime.

In fact, this is just one instance of how our present remains fissured by our problematic engagement with the past and as a result some of the ghosts we thought we had buried return to haunt our cherished gardens. This is evident from the paper by Allie Faden who looks at the uncanny resemblance between Daniel

Defoe's rhetoric in *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* and the 21st century rhetoric of Evangelical Republican office holders in the U.S.A. such critique is particularly significant in the context of global flows of people and the xenophobic and fundamentalist spectres such movements often confront. Chinoko Ngulube explores these issues as well by looking at migrant voices, their repression and representation in Abdourahman A. Waberi's *Transit*, positing the novel in the larger context of a locus of multicultural tolerance and freedom.

This particular issue looks at such diverse areas, interrogating official discourses and reports, trying to give voice to the ones that have been muffled, so that private memories, lived experiences and personal narratives, do not descend into what Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* called the craters of silence, hatched by the striated structures of Nation. And even as more and more voices scream, "What is your nation?" the quest for a space beyond otherising binaries in the future, through an examination of past and present, continues unabated. Read on...

P.S. A special note of thanks to Barnamala, Sagnik and Semanti for the wonderful last-minute assistance you provided. We are delighted to call you one of us.