

## *Editors' Note*

These are not laughing times. As this issue is prepared more and more Kashmiris are dying like flies, bewildered children are being separated from their parents across American borders, Palestine continues to be ravaged by Israeli atrocities and across India, different forms of macabre hatred continue to simmer, burst and crystallise on the streets, within homes and across digital platforms, all in the name of nation, religion and patriotism. An international survey has also declared India to be most unsafe for women. These are certainly not laughing times. So why this issue on postcolonial humour? The fact is that in times of despair, when forces of destruction and chaos run rampant, when indignation and attempts at consolidated resistance seem futile, when the very quest

for truth becomes mired in self-defeating scepticism, a loud guffaw might well be the last resort for those who seek to resist. Across time and space, satire, mockery and even self-deflating laughter has again and again been used by authors and artists to either expose the ridiculousness of those who deem themselves great or to dispel the aura of fear that power generates or to make us smilingly aware of our own inadequacies.

This is particularly relevant in the current context of the subcontinent because unlike developed democracies, where Presidents and Prime Ministers are regularly spoofed on prime time media to the delight of many, political satire and mocking laughter, directed powerful individuals or institutions often incite unchecked violence that might put one's very survival at stake. Yet artists keep on trying to laugh and to make others laugh as laughter also creates a community of feeling, a sense of solidarity which becomes vital in times of fear and despair. And academics such as ourselves who find our lives, endeavours and aspirations constricted by ever-multiplying regulations of arbitrary bureaucrats and non-academic politicians, practising laughter is essential to keep our existential crises at bay.

The issue includes six major articles and a book review, including four that are directly related to the thematic focus of the issue, and two that are of more general interest. The journey begins with Dr. Sukriti Ghosal's

extensive survey of the significance of humour in post-colonial literature and is followed by papers on stand up comedy and its political ramifications, the nonsense verse of Sukumar Roy and jokes in the context of post-colonial Cuba. The two general papers focus on discrimination and stereotyping faced by Arabs in the West and feminist concerns in the context of African postcolonial literature. The review is a particularly interesting one which focuses on experiences migrant students, including Indian students in Australia.

A sincere thanks to all our contributors and associates, including those who only register their presence in silence, for making this issue possible and for keeping the laughter alive.