

EDITORS' NOTE

Another year, another issue of the journal and another episode of an ongoing struggle against all the bleak, confounding injustices and aberrations of the world, armed with frail saplings of hope, convictions and dreams which continue to be buffeted by the raging storms of our turbulent times. But rhetorical flourishes only make sense when they are supplemented by various material actions that contribute to urgent programmes for the preservation of ecological balance, indigenous cultures and histories, redistribution of wealth and resources, systematic subversion of entrenched socio-political hierarchies and continuous consolidation of trans-border solidarities. Of course such goals are as arduous and challenging as ever as the networks of empire, capital and the structures of division they foster continue to gain in strength as well. In fact, even as I write, thousands of farmers around the Indian capital remain steadfast in their opposition to recently introduced farm laws aimed at ensuring greater corporatisation of the agricultural sector. While such a movement has invariably garnered a great deal of public support, various conspiracies, disinformation drives and a barrage of ideological villification is also continuing so that popular attention can be steered away from everyday realities and attendant forms of material deprivation.

How exactly should the academia engage with these and other multitudinous phenomena happening across the world? At times it does seem as if the entire enterprise of critical thinking about evolving socio-political realities and their cultural ramifications is rather futile as the political spectrum continues to be filled with hateful, venomous voices of dullards and dispeakables who seek to professionally nullify facts and reason and scientific truth in favour of sadistic, parochial fabrications peddled by megalomaniacs and profitmongers of various shades and sects. In India, even the internationally acclaimed voices of scholars like Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen or Jean Dreze continue to be subjected to institutional stigma and vituperative accusations, simply because of their dissenting arguments. Over the past few years, not only have we seen the assassination of various rationalists and nonconformist public personalities such as Narendra Dabholkar or Gauri Lankesh but also the incarceration of academics, journalists, lawyers and human rights activists along with systematic stifling of such organisations as Amnesty India or Greenpeace. In such circumstances, with what hope and faith should we continue our interventions?

The answer is both obvious and difficult. Whatever the extent of the adversities that besiege us, we have a responsibility to our professions, our students and our posterity to explore innovative, critical avenues of

thought which will enable us to rationally explore the challenges that confront us and imaginatively envision the times to come. Through one, two, ten or scores of readers that engage with our interventions and share our insights we embark on a shared path that renews our commitments, widens our horizons and makes us just a little bit less alone.

This particular issue, guest edited by Dr. Kerstin Knopf, is particularly remarkable as an example of such a shared journey. Professor Knopf and the other scholars who have contributed to this issue have placed their trust in a young journal simply on the basis of the quality of the previous issues and what they consider to be the credentials of this enterprise. This is indeed a matter of pride and gratitude. On behalf of the young editorial team of this journal we offer them our thanks. The cooperation of such scholars, including those who have contributed to our previous issues, is indeed a heartwarming experience in the face of some of the derision and condescension we have received along the way. We remain committed to the standards we have upheld so far and will definitely strive to improve them in future.

The promise of the future, however, should not make us blind to the past. In fact, we must sincerely remember the sacrifices of countless individuals who have embraced enormous hardships to serve others across the whole of the last year and had to even lay down

their lives in the face of an unforgiving pandemic. While there is much about the future that we cannot control, we must make sure that we treat each other with compassion, that we do not allow governments to consign the toiling populations of the world to systemic misery in our name, that we keep on raising our voices with reason so that so-called leaders cannot silence others in our name, that we do not plunge ourselves into heedless consumption and instead learn to practice the virtues of sharing and preserving our resources for the posterity.

This is indeed a tall order and may well be a chimerical pursuit. But our only option is to try. As Albus Dumbledore once remarked, "Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light". Through our academic endeavours, despite disillusionment, cynicism and despair, let us also walk towards the light in our own ways.