

## EDITORS' NOTE

One of the questions which I keep facing in academic circles even now is about the relevance of postcolonialism as an academic discipline. I am told that the discipline is becoming or has become dated. I am told that it creates colonial rule as a kind of false ceiling. I am told that as a framework it focuses more on western theoretical concepts which are not that germane to actual postcolonial conditions. What all such assertions keep missing, however, is that postcolonialism is also at heart an emancipatory discourse which sought to overcome centuries of colonial trauma and envision a world of plenitude which still remains unavailable. Instead we often find ourselves confronted with a sense of *deja vu* as various colonial maladies keep impinging upon our contemporary existence, at times under the guise of jingoistic nationalism, at times in the form of detention centres for refugees or declared foreigners, at times in the name of otherising minorities, at times in the form of justifying inequality and impoverishment of the majority for the benefit of a select elite or the distortion of history for the sake of a colonial template and much else. And in the middle of all these crises what remains unrealised are all those hopes and dreams of collective prosperity which had fuelled the anti-colonial movements, which had been championed by many ideologues

of the nationalist movements but which which the post-colonial states have failed to realise, often because of their continued allegiance to colonial models of governance or administration or because of the inability of the political processes to assimilate the lessons of the anti-colonial movements. What remains essential therefore is the need for struggles, the need for hope and the continuous endeavour to create those discourses which will shape the unborn future, away from the injustices and the iniquities of the present. Postcolonial studies is relevant because it must not only continually critique the material and discursive processes which are contributing to the deprivation of the majority but also because it must keep circulating those utopian potentialities without which the march towards a better future becomes and exercise in futility. And these utopian potentialities are there - whether in our literary texts or in our films or in our paintings or in the musical performances. Our jobs as critics, scholars and educators is to identify these representations and then share their insights and promises with others so that we can build on these ideas and ensure the crystallisation of multiple currents of emancipatory thoughts.

This is one of the basic ideas behind this journal which we have been trying to sustain with our labours of love for the last eight years. some might argue that we are suffering from a kind of vanguardist illusion about our own roles and responsibilities. Our conviction, however,

is that we all have a duty to our times to our futures and some of us must keep the banners flying in the battlefield of ideas, of consciousness so that all that we hold dear and precious do not get sold off in the late capitalist marketplace where everything can be commodified. what makes such an enterprise all the more difficult is the growing clericalisation of the academic community, especially in a country like India where understaffed or incompetently staffed colleges and universities are consistently subjected to various processes of accreditation and administrative data collection which compel academics to move away from their academic activities and participate in activities that have nothing to do with pedagogy, dissemination of knowledge or promotion of research. These are often soul-sucking mechanical processes associated with manufacturing of papers and data for the securing of administrative grants designed to improve academic infrastructure. The irony is that infrastructure does not produce results without the intervention of academics and those academics are themselves being drawn away from their academic pursuits because of their entanglement in such bureaucratic rigmarole. Unfortunately, Tagore's precious Vishwa Bharati, which he had established with the dream of discarding such bureaucratic trappings has also been suffering from similar blunders and instead has become a site for political slugfests of one kind or another.

In view of these developments, it becomes imperative to create independent spaces of solidarity and academic

collaboration through which one can develop new networks of knowledge, aesthetics and research which will also gradually infiltrate popular consciousness over the course of time so that discourses of hatred, division, elitism and exclusion can be challenged from the bottom up. This is how critics and scholars can take on the task of public intellectuals who will remain committed to collective material and discursive developments geared towards the aforementioned emancipatory horizons.

With your support we can keep striving towards these emancipatory horizons which are also signalled by the various articles of this issue which deal with entrenched biases and prejudices on the one hand and possibilities of alternate routes of development on the other. We hope you will find these articles stimulating and keep supporting us with your intellectual contributions.