

## EDITORIAL

In keeping with its general multi-disciplinary nature, the articles in this issue of the *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences* represent a wide spectrum of disciplines and fields, as well as approaches and methodologies. There is also within most of them a pronounced interdisciplinary thrust that inspires them to cut across rigid disciplinary boundaries, even as their general theoretical orientations may be identified as allied to distinct disciplinary persuasions. From a historical analysis of aesthetic discourses on classical music to a methodological critique of disability studies, from a political reading of the *Pancatantra* to an assessment of the Right to Information movement, from a study of Bollywood adaptations of English novels to a comparison of Rumi and Aurobindo, from an enquiry into the cultural implications of the shift toward nuclear families to an examination of the city as a cultural space, they also attempt to bring into the ken of scholarly discourse areas and aspects that have hitherto not received the kind of attention and scrutiny that they properly deserve. At the same time, a common strand that runs through most of them is a deep concern with India and its diverse experiences and expressions, both of the present and of the past, thus offering a fair reflection of the scholarly and research concerns that describe Indian academia today.

The first article investigates the rise of aesthetic discourses on Indian classical music, both as part of living practice as well as a sub-field of formal musicology. Drawing upon a heterogeneous archive of biographies, auto-biographical reflections, formal texts, opinion pieces, anecdotes and curricular material, Lakshmi Subramanian traces how the twin movements of practice and discourse corresponded to the complex divisions that characterized the social milieu of music performance and scholarship in late colonial India. Focusing on Southern India and Bengal, she brings out the principal sources for the formulation of a language of aesthetics and its principal tenets from the end of the 19th to the first half of the 20th century. It is indeed a commonplace that narratives, whether ancient or modern, are treasure troves for political ideas and there have been many fruitful attempts at excavating ancient texts to extract from them the embryonic antecedents of modern political

ideas and concepts. The second article by Vasanthi Srinivasan is one such where she traces friendship as a political idea in the *Pancatantra* in order to highlight the concern with equality between and among friends. Taking specific stories as exemplars, she probes how the idea that friendship can flourish best among equals is overtly affirmed, but also subtly questioned, in this classic about practical wisdom.

Coming to a more contemporary context, five essays address issues that are of considerable current interest, but in widely divergent areas. Gitika De's "What do Social Movements Achieve?" is an exploration of the impact of collective action on both movement participants and society at large, through an extended case study of India's national transparency law, the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. She examines the trajectory through which civic participation in a social movement confronts the networks of social power comprising of local society, bureaucratic influence, and the Indian state, through an analysis of the exchanges between social movements, states and political society; the cumulative effects of a transparency law; and the implications of a transparency law in engendering state-citizen engagement for broader goals of equality and social justice. Alexander F Scott's essay on the implications of a broad cultural shift toward a nuclear family norm in India, as a result of economic development, is an attempt to propose valid alternative models of human development. In contrast to the established 'self and primary other' model, he puts forward a 'self and multiple-other' model of intimate and attachment relationships, and a joint family trajectory of biopsychosocial development. Even as there have been recurrent calls, from experts and activists alike, for sustainable development that ensures the well being of both the larger environment as well as human communities, it is a sad fact that most developmental enterprises in India have come at a very high environmental and human cost. In this connection, Niharranjan Mishra's article attempts to explore the impact of coal mining on local environment, taking both experimental and control villages into account. The study, while dealing with local environment, has mostly focused on the sociological impact of mining in terms of air, water and noise pollution, and on how it has disturbed the local health systems.

For more than a decade, researchers engaging with 'disability' have taken a keen interest in the 'capability approach' framework proposed by Amartya Sen in the field of Economics. In his essay, Wilbur Gonsalves attempts to disengage with the popular conceptualizations of ability embedded in different models of disability and re-examine

the idea of ability with reference to the capability approach. 'Capability' is here taken as reflected in the 'freedom to pursue well being', which is understood in terms of freedom to choose a type of life one values or wants to lead, and which can be realized through a set of functions. In conclusion, it also tries to spell out some specific recommendations for rehabilitation professionals based on the new framework. The formation of enclaves in India and Bangladesh was the outcome of the historical partition of India in 1947. The inhabitants of the enclaves were deprived of basic amenities, rights, opportunities and governmental support from either country until the signing of the historic Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) between the two countries in the year 2015, by virtue of which 51 Bangladeshi enclaves inside Indian territory and 111 Indian enclaves inside Bangladesh territory were transferred to each other. Debarshi Bhattacharya's study attempts to assess the impact of LBA, 2015 on the lives of the people of these erstwhile enclaves, in terms of various indices of quality of life.

In its marked move towards the interdisciplinary methodologies of comparative literature and cultural studies, the area of Literary Studies probably offers the most illuminating instances of the paradigm shift that defines the Humanities today. Three essays in this issue reflect this paradigm shift in their own distinct ways. First, Oindrilla Ghosh's article looks at Bollywood adaptations of Thomas Hardy's novels and contends that it is cinema, more than print literature, which has helped in the dissemination of Hardy's novels in India and contributed to his popularity among Indian translators, leading to large-scale, often multiple, translations in major Indian languages. She also traces the interest of Indian film makers in Hardy's novels to the sensational elements in his plots, which according to her ensured commercial success for their films. S. N. Kiran's essay on Lahore attempts to examine the palimpsest nature of the city. The city was destroyed several times in military invasions but was reconstructed time and again and inherited the Sufi and the Sikh traditions before it was occupied by the British. The essay explores writings on the city including legends, travelogues, memoirs, autobiographies and historical accounts to map the multilayered cultural spaces of the city. At the same time, Sarani Ghosal Mondal compares the poetry of Rumi and Aurobindo, both of whom were engaged in a life-long quest for human unity and knew that it could be attained only through love and cosmic consciousness. Focussing primarily on Rumi's *Divan-e-Shams*, *Masnavi* and *Rubaiyat* and Aurobindo's sonnets and lyrics, Mondal discusses in

detail the thematic similarities of their poetry from the perspectives of mysticism, love, cosmic consciousness and the spiritual evolution of man.

Sunetra Mitra's essay is a serious attempt at a fresh look at the philosophy and practice of Vivekananda. Steering clear of the customary view of him as the spiritual ambassador of India in the West, it argues that Vivekananda inaugurated a new and rather interesting way of discovering India, a method that was built on direct action and accessibility to the masses. It also contends that by turning the focus of his monist metaphysics to how they can be practically applicable, he incorporated into the essential determination of religion an engagement with suffering and needy humanity. The issue ends with a review of Sujatha Gidla's *Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India*, a significant contribution to new Dalit literature in English, which records the life of a Dalit family in Andhra Pradesh and details the hardships faced even by educated Dalits in the first three-quarters of the 20th century.