

Editor's Note

At the inauguration of the IAS, its founder Dr S. Radhakrishnan, then the President of India, had reminded: "But when these technical creations become spectacular, over-whelming, there is a danger that it may give rise to some kind of lack of equilibrium. It is that which we should avoid." Today the danger is becoming acute after a super-spectacular surge in technology had potentially connected everyone, individual as well as group, to every another in the world. Any message, idea, picture, speech, video, detail, false or true, can be transmitted by anyone for one or all in the world. Therefore, not only propagation of an idea but also manipulation of it or a situation, society, community, even a whole country has become possible in a way one could not have imagined few decades ago.

The situation in the West is more indicative of the danger. For the first time in the US history education is turning into a kind of civil war situation. From primary schools to the universities, academia, and media the mercury is rising. A whole chain of 'studies' – Gender studies, Ethnic studies, Afro-American studies, Women studies, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender studies: these are more becoming political grievances & demands than disciplines of study. Most of it are now seen by many serious observers to be serving not liberal education but feckless antinomianism which Jacques Barzun, a noted historian of ideas and culture, dubbed as 'directionless quibble'. The situation is indeed grave, as academic freedom is freely used by a number of organised and interconnected groups to suffocate the freedom of differing voices. John Silber, with his long and close experience as a president of Boston University called it 'poisoning the Wells of Academe'. He noted the trend decades ago, that the academic freedom has "come to entail, rather, an immunity for whatever is said and done, responsibly or carelessly, within or without the walls of academia, by persons unconnected for the truth; who, reckless, incompetent, frivolous or even malevolent, promulgate ideas for which they can claim no expertise,

or even commit deeds for which they can claim no sanction of law."

Such direct observations are worth pondering for us in our country, for we have for a very long time been but following the educational and ideological trends & models almost entirely of the West. Even to the structure, pattern, style, terminology, and verbiage. Therefore, we need to reflect searchingly if and to what extent a similar malady can be identified in social science and humanities departments in the Indian universities and, by logical corollary, in media and politico-legal arena as well.

Therefore, the warning of Dr Radhakrishnan regarding a 'lack of equilibrium' has to be revisited again and again, and much more earnestly. In this issue of the *Summerhill* the paper "Is India a Secular State?" by Dr Koenraad Elst is significant in this regard. Dr Elst has raised pertinent questions regarding the theory and practice of secularism in India that has been a most central and contentious issue in independent India. His arguments have to be examined in the context of the growing importance of the Constitution of India among the dominant political circles in the country. Another paper "The communal concern in social science education" also re-examines a serious malady in the history writing and education in India going on for several decades. The concern has also affected the studies, research and education in literature, sociology, political science, international studies, and many related disciplines. In his paper "Modern Jainism: Dharma of Sustainability and Sustainability of Dharma" Prof. Pankaj Jain brings to notice a number of facets of modern Jainism relevant to the present times. Prof. Ravinder Singh has tried in "Sahitya or literature" to present an essential difference in the literary ethos of India and the West. Dr Shilpi Das has brought first time into English the writings of the noted painter Nandalal Bose about Patrick Geddes and Arthur Geddes, the close associates of Rabindranath Tagore in his educational and social endeavors.

Among other contributions in this issue Kabirdash Mayengbam has outlined a history of aggression in Manipur during 17th-18th centuries. Jahid Hasan and Enayatullah Khan summarise the historical role of Christian missions in the educational arena in the Nadia district of Bengal. Manchusha Madhusudhanan tried to decode the *Theyyam* dance of Kerala, what she found its mnemonic configurations. Manisha Choudhary has reviewed the role of some significant political dignitaries in the Jaipur state in medieval times. Nirmal Kumar Mahato has examined the British Forest Policy in the Lushai hills during the 19th-20th centuries.

Finally, the issue records the details about the academic activities of the Institute during the first half of the year. That is, the contributions of Visiting Scholars, Guest Fellows, Weekly seminars, and lectures by Visiting Professors and other dignitaries, study presentations by the Associates in the UGC-Inter-University Centre, and some special events that took place at the Institute during the period. Readers are invited to go through the papers and articles in this issue of *Summerhill* and evaluate it in view of the educational challenges mentioned above.