

## Note from the Editor

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We are happy to offer our readers yet another issue of *Summerhill: IAS Review* (Vol. XXV, Number 2, Winter, 2019). This has been made possible by the kind and enthusiastic patronage of our authors and readers who have supported us through the year. We are especially happy that we have been able to elicit an interest in younger scholars who now make up the bulk of the contributions. This is, indeed, an encouraging sign. We would be remiss if we failed to mention the professional assistance that we have received from the concerned staff of the IAS and copy editors. But for their prompt help and support, matters may have been considerably delayed.

This number has 11 papers in all on a variety of subjects ranging from literature to indigenous forms of medicine, from the birth of new historical consciousness to anthropological studies of specialized craft communities. This reflects our attempts to keep alive the interdisciplinary nature of this journal.

In his paper on *Brahmanising Ayurveda: Caste and Class Dimensions of Late Colonial Ayurveda Movement in Upper India*, Saurav K. Rai deals with the interesting theme of how anti-colonial sentiments, urging a return of indigenous ways of medical diagnosis and healing as against the prevailing hegemony of Western medicine, also eventually leads to a transformation in the social character of the Ayurveda system itself. He persuasively demonstrates how, in the name of counter hegemony, there also occurs a move on the part of Hindu upper castes and Brahmanical culture to appropriate the indigenous medical system to itself. This was done by identifying the system with upper caste notions of purity and pollution, cleanliness, disease and healing. In this discourse, lower caste practitioners are shown to be themselves the carriers of disease and professionally incapable of effective medical diagnosis.

Mahaeswar Hazaarika's contribution ("Uttarkanda Ramayan and Mother Sita as Depicted by Valmiki and Sankardeva") is a critical and a comparative study of the

character of Sita as depicted in two well known works, the Valmiki *Ramayana* and *Uttarkanada*, an adaptation of Valmiki's work by the Assamese saint and reformer, Sankardeva. The comparison is based on the study of identical episodes from the two works in a comparative frame. Hazaarika shows with ample clarity how the characterization of the same figure from mythology varies significantly. Sankardeva's Sita in the *Uttarakanda* is only an ordinary woman, in all probability drawn from local life itself. She is chaste, spontaneous, given to freely expressing her emotions and reacting in the face of some personal crisis. The Sita in Valmiki, by contrast, is stoic, remarkably self-restrained, and closer to being a divine figure than a human.

Sharmila Chandra's "To be One with the Gods: The Jagannath Cult and the Chitrakars of Puri" is a historical-anthropological study of the community of *chitrakars* concentrated around Raghurajpur in district Puri (Odisha). Professionally, members of this community constitute a craft community who traditionally specialize in making *pata chitras* or scroll paintings which depict various motifs, the bulk of which is religious in character and related to the shrine of Jagannath and other attendant deities. Their everyday life and production patterns are both dictated by the local Jagannath Cult, overwhelming in its cultural, religious and ritual importance in Odiya life. The paper deals with the historical evolution of this community and their present day occupational habitus and norms of life.

Malabika Majumdar's scholarly paper titled "Ethical Views on War and Peace: Perspectives from the Brahmanical and Buddhist Literature" combines a survey of early Indian literature on the related themes of war and peace. The treatment here is essentially philosophical though also effectively relying on knowledge of contemporary literature. Majumdar examines, in some detail, the ethical questions confronting a ruler when forced to declare a war and its ensuing consequences. While wars were primarily instruments

of aggrandizement, there were also deep-seated moral questions related to it that our thinkers and law-givers were forced to reckon with. This paper, in particular, examines the complex question of *dharmayuddha* wherein it was not always possible to clearly take a side.

Srijani Bhattacharjee examines certain important environmental questions in a historical framework and pertaining to the tribal community of Khasis in the state of Meghalaya. Her paper, "Nature in Transition: Transformations in Nature Use, Beliefs and Control in Khasi Hills in Pre-colonial and Colonial Eras", is an intensive study of cultural and environmental strategies traditionally adopted by the Khasis and the changes wrought upon it by the arrival of an extractive colonialist system. Bhattacharjee discusses in some detail the traditional occupations among Khasis and how these were made to suit environmental concerns until productive mechanisms themselves were forced to change under an alien regime, which had a poor understanding of the delicate balance between nature and human production.

Sudarshan Bhaumik's paper is a combined narrative on certain concepts in religious culture such as eclecticism and syncretism and the social and historical evolution of certain quotidian religious cults in early modern and modern Bengal. In the paper titled *Understanding the Religious Worlds of the Subalterns: An Analysis of Syncretic Culture in Bengal* Bhaumik draws upon and develops the concept of subalternity in the context of popular religious culture in Bengal and her intention is to demonstrate how popular religious cults carry elements of dissent and contestation against mainstream, upper caste culture. Alongside, she also tries to reveal how at the popular level, cultural and religious co-existence between Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims thrived until displaced by the working of the colonialist regime with its misplaced presumptions about indigenous culture. Her paper also demonstrates the dialogic nature of exchanges between upper class and lower class culture, each selectively appropriating certain elements from the other.

Shubhneet Kaushik's study of indigenous concept of history lays open a promising field of enquiry. The well-known novelist, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, had once prophesized that to survive in the alien and alienating world of colonialism, Indians needed to write their own histories. Kaushik's study titled "Writing Cultural History of Early India: V.S. Agarwala and the Indigenous Concept of History" brings home this point effectively. This is an extensive study of the writings of the historian, V.S. Agarwala, who chose to write also in Hindi about the early Indian literature and culture. The decision to write on early India, we imagine, has a deep rooted connection with the emerging nationalist discourse in India which was of the view that a true recovery of the

cultural genius of the Indian people was not possible when examined through the lens of Western history-writing. Western historical methods and its selection of sources was itself flawed since it carried certain naïve Orientalist presumptions. It is entirely possible though that Agarwala's enterprise was influenced by the sentiments of cultural revivalism that accompanied the birth of historical consciousness and history-writing in colonial India.

Rama Shanker Singh in his contribution, "At the Doorsteps of Democracy: Nomads and their Political Space in Uttar Pradesh", has outlined the life of nomadic tribes both in colonial and post-colonial India. He has shown that the colonial rulers had perniciously designated the nomadic tribes as 'criminal tribes' and subjected them to inhuman treatment. In colonial India, these tribes led a miserable life at the periphery of the villages. After Independence, these tribes were de-criminalized so that they could have a better social and professional life. Singh presents us with a factually rich account of lived lives in the villages, especially in Uttar Pradesh. He now finds them at the "doorsteps of democracy" because they now have the right to participate in the electoral process and demand their share of good life in India.

Sweta Kumari in her essay, "Representation of Indian Spirituality in the United States: Contributions of Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda", has discussed the role of Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda in spreading the message of Indian spirituality in the United States. Swami Vivekananda's participation in the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 was a turning point in history because he could draw the attention of the world and especially the people of the USA to the spiritual philosophy of India. He preached the message of Vedanta as a Universal Religion and Philosophy which could accommodate all mankind in its bosom. Sweta Kumari has also highlighted the contribution of Paramahansa Yogananda in spreading the message of Yoga and spirituality in the US. Paramahansa Yogananda established many centres of meditation and spiritual practices throughout the US and continued the work which Swami Vivekananda had started. Sweta Kumari's essay has succeeded in revealing how Indian spirituality found a second home in the US.

Mousumi Guha-Banerjee in "Philosophy and Literature: A Discussion on the Two Contiguous Facets of the Concept of 'Truth' About Knowledge" has discussed the deep relationship between philosophy and literature. She argues that just as there is a philosophy 'of' literature so also there is philosophy 'in' literature. Literature, according to her, is the aesthetic view of the sublime. This explains why literary creations embody the aesthetic values which are central to the literary

imagination. Philosophy brings into literature the awareness of aesthetic values like the Kantian “sublime” making literary creations the embodiments of truths about life. There is no literary knowledge which is bereft of the philosophical awareness of Truth and Beauty as values. Guha-Banerjee has creatively brought out for us the symbiotic relationships among literature, aesthetics and philosophy.

Krishnamurari Mukherjee’s paper titled “Politics of Knowledge as a Cause for Unfair Development: Revisiting the Case of Niyamgiri” is a thought-provoking paper on the politics of development that affects the

tribal community of Kondhs in the Niyamgiri hills of Odisha. The author brings out the social cost of economic development and the inequitable effects of modern capital intensive development on various segments of local population and the recurring inability of local communities to resist the encroachment on their natural rights.

We hope this issue of the journal will be of interest to readers across all disciplines, particularly from the Humanities and Social Sciences. We have also included five book reviews for the benefit of the readers.

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