

Note from the Editor

Albeena Shakil

The two-year Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, have begun. This issue of *Summerhill: IAS Review* appears at this auspicious occasion.

The Institute came into existence with the generous vision of the then President of India, S. Radhakrishnan, and the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. The grand Rashtrapati Niwas (formerly the Viceregal Lodge) was bestowed to the Institute. The Indian Institute of Advanced Study Society was registered on 6 October 1964 and the Institute was formally inaugurated on 20 October 1965 by the then President, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Besides the President, the inaugural ceremony was addressed by Dr Zakir Husain, the then Vice-President of the Republic and President of the Society; Sri M.C. Chagla, the then Union Minister of Education and the Chairperson of the Governing Body and Professor Niharranjan Ray, the founding Director of the Institute.

Among very few of its kind across the world, especially in a decolonized nation, the Institute came into existence with the expressed aim to provide a suitable environment for academic research in the humanities, social and natural sciences in India. The Fellows-in-Residence programme was evolved as the core of the Institute. Since then, over four hundred national and international Fellows have undertaken research at IAS in various disciplines. By now, the fellowship programme has expanded to include National, Tagore and regular Fellows alongside periodic visits by Visiting Professors, Visiting Scholars and Guest Scholars. Beside the in-house Institute Press, which publishes research monographs and conference proceedings, the Institute brings out two journals - *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences* and *Summerhill: IAS Review*. It has also been a host to numerous conferences, seminars, workshops, study schools and lectures over the years, and houses a richly stocked and vibrant library that has continued to draw interested scholars to the Institute.

The main mandate of research at the Institute has been to promote areas of "deep human significance"

and "inter-disciplinary research". After fifty years of IAS, questions of advancing the frontiers of knowledge, especially in the humanities and social sciences, remain as relevant as ever. There are many opinions and opinion-holders in the contested terrain of facts and perspectives in the wider society as well as the intellectual world. Perhaps the distinctive feature of the opinions and views evolved by researchers and scholars is that they are based on reasoned negotiation, through extensive and intensive study, of divergent facts and perspectives. While some scholars may engage their efforts in the terrain of facts, others may engage more in the terrain of perspectives and some may engage with both to confirm, refute or advance the archive of knowledge. The measure of good scholarship often is whether it is based on attending to enough relevant facts and enough relevant perspectives instead of merely confining itself to echo chambers or operating in the restricted terrain of received knowledge and rote learning. Diversity within the scholarly community is also of great significance.

In his inaugural address, Professor S. Radhakrishnan laid down his expectations from the Institute – "increasing maturity should express itself in this capacity to understand what other points of view are." Research at the Institute was envisaged as an attempt to "co-operate, to bring together people, to establish friendship" instead of "talk of enemies, of conflict and war." It is not surprising that antipathy to research is often expressed by those who wish to ride roughshod over divergent views and are more interested in talk of enmity and conflict. For the success of this experimental Institute, Professor Niharranjan Ray, its founding Director, sought two assurances: "(a) complete academic freedom; and (b) relative freedom from financial worries. Higher learning and research does not want to be interfered with, and an intellectual and seeker of truth who can be made to wait on the pleasures of others, is not certainly worth his salt." One of the key challenges for contemporary research in the humanities and social sciences is that due to fund and

other constraints it often has to wait on the pleasures of others. IAS, Shimla, in that regard, has weathered many storms, but has strived to retain and safeguard a spirit of free inquiry and research.

This issue of *Summerhill: IAS Review* is neither a review of the Institute nor of the general state of research in the country or the world. The collection presented here is more modest. The first piece involves reminiscences by Prof. Radhavallabh Tripathi about a two-week school organised by him at IAS, Shimla, on Bharata's *Natyashastra* from 26 August to 7 September 2014. Titled "Bharata Returns" the essay is as much about the *Natyashastra* as it is about the vibrant fraternity of scholars who participated in the school. The essay, thus, offers glimpses into the world of research and researchers at IAS through one of its important exercises, that of organising periodic study schools.

If the first piece is about an ancient theory of theatre and its contemporary relevance, the second essay by Prof. A. Achuthan is on the 'Contemporary Experience and Indian Theatre,' covering the extensive multilingual terrain of modern Indian theatre, especially the emergent trends in Dalit-Adivasi, women's and contemporary mythological theatre. Coming from an active theatre practitioner and scholar, the essay will be valuable for anyone seeking to obtain a quick overview of theatre in India today.

In the recent past, the academic community has lost many stalwarts. This issue of *Summerhill* carries two tributes paid by fellows-in-residence to two such scholars. The first is to the towering historian, Prof. Bipan

Chandra, by his former student, Prof. K.L. Tuteja, and the second is to the legendary writer, U.R. Ananthamurthy, by R. Umamaheshwari. Both provide glimpses into the works and lasting impact of such exceptional scholars upon academics and the society at large.

Beside essays, the issue also carries several book reviews as well as information about the latest publications by the Institute. It is hoped that the collection will provide some indication of the vibrant research environment at the Institute.

Besides seminars by National Fellows, Tagore Fellows, Fellows at the Institute and Visiting scholars, in the course of this year, IAS has been involved in organising the following in the second half of 2014: Symposium on 'Interrogating "Swaraj in Ideas"' (21- 22 July 2014); Commemorative Programme on "Remembering Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan: Teacher, Philosopher and Institution Builder" (05 September 2014); National Seminar on 'Sexuality and Society in India' (16-18 September 2014); National Seminar on 'Shimla: Harmonizing Colonial Inheritance, Urban Aesthetics and Modernization' (07-08 October 2014); Second Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Lecture by Gulzar Sahib, including inauguration of a new photo gallery at the Rashtrapati Niwas (September 2014); National Seminar on 'The Power of Communication: The Media, Public Space and Participatory Democracy' (13-14 October 2014); National Seminar on 'Idea of Transgression' (27-29 October 2014); National Seminar on 'Disciplines, Movements and Policies: The Changing Relationship between Science, State and Society' (24-25 November 2014).