



Editorial

Artha Journal of Social Sciences is an official publication of Christ University, Bengaluru. Entering into its seventeenth year, *AJSS* has already published several national and internationally relevant articles from across diverse areas in the field of social sciences. While we have a generic focus across the various regions of humanities and social sciences, striking a balance between papers with theoretical and empirical focus has always been one challenge that editorial board has meticulously dealt with. The one massive change in the last two decades in academic writing globally, and specifically in contexts like India, has been the shift from focusing on the empirical richness alone. The theoretical undergirds through which such empiricism has survived are no longer taken for granted in academic writings. Even disciplines and traditions inside disciplines that are more or less fully focused on 'data' alone, and making interpretations therein, are not exempted from this overwhelming trend. This is coupled with the issue of identifying topics that are of both academic and national/regional significance. With a generic layout and with a large number of submissions it becomes extremely a tough profession to be choosy. While rejection rates are inevitably higher, it does not solely result from matters concerned with papers' professional brilliance as much as it comes from efforts to ensure balance between the different priorities. In an increasingly globalised world the local too becomes a space demanding a lot of scholarly attention. It has to be given adequate importance just as theories, amidst the flow of empirical data. In other words just as theories are deliberately made visible, questioned or verified for their applicability, the local, its political and cultural geographies and its different discourses, should also be sufficiently accounted in the thickness of global discourses. These, the theoretical and the territorial, signify the two ends of which articles are selected and finalized for *Artha* editions.

One major signifier of postmodernity is the twist in the way women's question has been fore-grounded in social and academic circles. Shifting from the traditional modes, where women's question were deliberated on the grounds of development

indicators such as education, health, marriage and so on, in the contemporary it is more about going into the micro levels of patriarchal oppression and subjugation. Susanne's paper in this edition looks at the possibilities of theorising the question of rape by an intimate partner or marital rape as it is commonly known, in the larger Indian context. Discussions of marital rape have been alive now for some time starting from the first world and then spreading to other locations. In India, as Susanne clearly points, there has been serious lacunae when it comes to marital sexual violence to the extent that it escapes a clear recognition in Indian public spheres. She argues that there is a social and historical construct behind the Indian hesitation to accept marital rape as a "real case" that has clearly reflected in the "juridification" (2) of the issue.

In a context like that of India, the women's question requires definitely a multi-perspectival approach. While India is still young in its career in modernity, it still has to go a long way to ensure gender equality and more vibrant political participation of its women. *Marital rape* signifies a major instance of gender disequilibrium in India's social contexts that are more operational in the private domains that necessitate new and nuanced theoretical apparatuses for a clear comprehension. On the other side of this hidden domesticity remains the political sphere where there is a growing participation from the women's end facilitated by numerous legislation and empowerment programmes. Raheena and Sara in this edition shift the site of discussion to the question of women's participation in political sites amidst the changing map of Indian democracy. Their study of women elected representatives in some village panchayats in South India brings to light how effective the 73rd and 74th amendments have remained in opening new space for women to enter into local public lives. While analysing the effectiveness of such political participation, the authors observe that such efforts should result in instances of actual empowerment where women's specific "needs related to education, gender roles, division of labour, etc.," are given sufficient attention (37). On the one hand, gender-based discrimination continues to prevail in administrative and decision making spheres as also in other political platforms – both internal and external. This often results in a dismay among the women's representatives who

have to consistently stage battles to register their opinions. On the other hand, when it comes to the disposal of responsibilities in their legislative areas, these women, as authors observe, have performed commendably and to the satisfaction of the people, they represent. Nevertheless, there are “socio-cultural” factors that still function like stumbling blocks in the full-fledged participation of these women in the local democratic processes (36).

The much commonly praised development model of Kerala is revisited by Simon in his article on health accessibility and morbidity patterns. He points to the rampant criticisms against state’s development patterns on the basis of reports about rising morbidity rates across the different strata of the society. Morbidity is reported as high despite the state’s lower mortality rates. This has raised suspicions about the replicability of this model to other contexts, no matter how beneficial it has remained in fulfilling certain social promises such as education, literacy, health and so on and so forth. The two major arguments available in context are, one that the high rate comes from high reportability of instances of morbidity which is a direct offshoot of higher educational achievement and better healthcare accessibility; and two, that instances of morbidity are real and points at hazardous and unhealthy circumstances that actually prevail in the region. Simon begins with a statistical paradox apparently visible in the NSSO data on morbidity patterns in the state where morbidity rates are found to be high among the highest monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) groups and lowest among “Scheduled Tribe group, who are considered to be the poorest of the poor” (41). This obviously points towards the significance of the factor of reportability in the higher morbidity patterns. The paper points at the interconnection between types of ailments among the different socioeconomic groups under study and the higher morbidity patterns in the state. Types of ailments are also important to the extent it puts light on the differences in morbidity patterns as experienced by those groups. However, the paper draws from the multiple factors associated with the morbidity trends and makes a clear statistical map of the present scenario and identifies some major concern that needs be immediately addressed.

Environmentalism has remained another major site of serious concern in the recent periods in academic and non-academic circles. It is still a contested area when it comes to the question what methods, policies and measurements – coupled with theoretical insights – will be more helpful in engineering a better and a much-nuanced system to maintain a pollution free environment. At the heart of these debates remain questions pertaining to forest conservation. From highly centralised systems of administration the world, at least many parts of the world, has already moved towards people's participation. This works more effectively in the context of forest management because forests are also a space where human beings interact with environment very closely. Bachan and Maya's article insist on giving a prominent role to the human dwellers in the forests in the preservation of forests. The authors draw the reader's attention to the subtleties involved in forest conservation management and the changes that have taken place ever since the recent Forest Rights Act (FRA) was passed in the year 2006 by the Indian government. The question of forest conservation was in a serious crisis, according to the authors, ever since forest protection was shifted to the modern state from its traditional havens. The bureaucratic institutional frameworks of modern state have always worked on exclusionary principles resulting in the total alienation of the Adivasis from their natural habitats. It is in this respect that FRA with its progressive outlook had emerged in the Indian scene. As Bachan and Maya argue that "though FRA recognize the possibility of merging the traditional [indigenous] institutions with the state institutions . . . this is not an easy job" for it calls for a change in the philosophical framework within which the state institutions including the bureaucracy have operated historically (72).

The current edition, apart from research articles, also includes a book review by Alex Thomas of Azim Premji University and a lengthy field note about the Adivasi situation in Kerala by Pradeep Kumar. Pradeep who has been a part of KIRTADS, the Kerala government Institute responsible for Research, Training and Development Studies of Scheduled Castes and Tribes at various levels and now a deputy director, makes his observations on the basis of his field experiences. The status of Adivasis has consistently depleted all over the country since colonial times and,

particularly in states like Kerala, has gone to worst proportions as their presence has never been substantial enough for a deeper politicization. Pradeep observes that more or less all tribal communities in the state have already lost or are in process of losing their traditional ways of existence. The state negligence coupled with its failure to arrive at a development pattern that will address the indigenous populations have resulted in serious struggles for survival on the part of several Adivasi communities. The model of “coexistence” thus has completely disappeared from various Adivasi sites in the state who, as the author observes, live on the uncertain in-between spaces of tradition and modernity. However, he also discusses the case of Muthuvans, an Adivasi community living in the south-central parts, who have managed to stage some amount of resistance against the hegemony of the mainstream society and changing social conditions. The field note is a description of the sites of change at the generic level and resistance in the sites of Muthuvans.

Thus the current edition incorporates grounds of contestations primarily related to sites of development belonging to varied contexts. As I mentioned, in the beginning, we have also endeavoured to maintain a balance between conceptually and empirically driven articles. Universities are primarily sites of teaching and learning where research becomes an exciting, nevertheless an additional, enterprise requiring a lot of extra working hours. Precisely for the same reason, I admit that a number of flaws would have entered into this edition of Artha. However, while we anticipate the reader to point the mistakes and promise to work towards improving from our side, we also anticipate the reader to initiate more conceptual level discussions on the various issues that the edition addresses.

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