

## Editorial

*Artha, a Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, published from Christ University aspires to bring together research articles, opinions and essays that bring forth contested boundaries, allow deliberations and debates with academic rigour and thereby help in facilitating a continuing engagement between academia and the current socio-political situations.

This issue of *Artha* is designed as an eclectic, an eclectic that draws from varied sources, nevertheless, engages with concerns theoretical, methodological or political that binds the issue together and demand serious academic and critical engagement. This issue aspires to specifically address negotiations that are pedagogical, spatial and conceptual. They bring forth various kinds of contestations and calls into question some of the issues that have not been deliberated upon by scholars in recent time.

Some of these articles featured in this issue acknowledge the questions and concerns emerging from pedagogical spaces within disciplines such as Literature and Media Studies. Articles by Padmakumar et al., Etienne and Mini articulate interdisciplinary narratives on pedagogical challenges in higher education space to engage simultaneously with curriculum conformance and initiating interdisciplinarity within classroom spaces.

Nāsadiyasūkta of *rigveda* mentions that *in the beginning was desire*, the desire which was the primal seed of the mind, which in tandem with strength and impulse created everything. Etienne Rassendren's article speaks of desire, but of the various manifestations of desire, he situates one of desire's articulations in the political, hegemonic and oppressive continuities of imperialism vis-à-vis colonialism. While his article is situated within post-colonial studies, he, however, makes an important contribution here. He anchors his research within the "political conquest, cultural violence and economic exploitation that both imperialism as ideology and colonisation as practice have been involved in" but notes, how 'imperial desire,' as a concept, can be used as a frame to understand how imperial fascinations have continued in their deceptive avatars. Using Jonathan Gil Harris' *The First White*

Firangis: Remarkable Stories of Heroes, Healers, Charlatans, Courtesans and other Foreigners who Became Indian (2015) and films such as *Passage to India* (1984); *Gandhi* (1982) and *Lagaan* (2001), he articulates how 'imperial desire' operates via practices and behaviors such as the imperialist's epistemic curiosity for tropical knowledge, her fascinations for exploring "alternative sexualities in an exotic land" and her reinstating of the hegemonic control via acts of 'civilisational benevolence'. His article is aimed for scholars and teachers of post-colonialism to explore yet another dimension of imperialism and colonialism in humanities and social sciences classroom spaces.

Mini Mark Bonjour's article offers an analysis of a Merchant Ivory film, 'The Deceivers,' to argue how films depict problematic cross-cultural representations of communities, especially owing to their depictions of 'exotic' communities which reflects a continuing shade of colonial overtone. She connects her observations thereof to suggest how, when such texts are used as pedagogic resources, teachers need to be cautious of delineating these subtle layers of power and colonial hegemony within the subtexts and use the opportunity to raise concerns about the continuing problematics of representation as a partial and political process.

*Narrativising a Department of English* by Padmakumar, Gaana J and Mohan Kunjukrishna Pillai problematises the complexities and contestations within the transitory, evolving nature of a department of English. They indicate, therefore, a concern both theoretical and pedagogical in engaging with the challenges of introducing or unmasking the dialectics of curricula vis-à-vis perspectives of teachers and students within an institutional space. The article is created by weaving in three distinct individual narratives and taking an unapologetic path of acknowledging 'subjectivity' as a valid epistemological means. They note that "as the authors of this article, it is our firm belief that listening to personal experience will open doors to unexplored critical insights. We are deeply aware of the dangerous terrain we are treading in and hence we have titled it as "narrativising...", signifying the subjective takes involved."

Sumithra Sunder reflects on the experiences and narratives of researchers, activists, and practitioners that concern with the reclaiming of 'spaces', spaces that are being compromised, without considerations of its impact on the democratic and 'contemporary' practices of art in Bangalore. In the light of a recent event, wherein the government had decided to retract its patronage from the Venkatappa art gallery, art collectives had waged a persistent campaign against the move. Sumitra tries to uncover the socio-economic-political-aesthetic urgency in these campaigns. She probes the answers through tracing the evolution of art galleries, institutions and art schools in Bangalore, noting how through their transitions, Bangalore's art spaces have created, challenged and sustained, to use her phrase, the "life praxis of art community". She observes, how "in the visual arts, great modernists like KK Hebbar and Venkatappa, who have become symbols of modernity in the art historical landscape of Karnataka, aimed to resolve the pull of regional affiliation and the desire to acknowledge the global inheritance of contemporary art practice" and created inclusive and democratic spaces for the artists that served as "spaces of higher education". Art collectives in Bangalore emerged as alternative spaces for art practices that found the institutional constraints of the art schools stifling, and also served as 'networks of solidarity' for raising civic awareness. In the recent turn of events, they, therefore, deemed it as necessary and part of their responsibility, as concerned practitioners, to reclaim the space, that is one of the few higher education spaces that strived for and was nurtured in a democratic spirit.

Vineetha Krishnan's paper is an observation of the contested claims of who has access to, who are 'real' arbiters of film appreciation, and thereby 'more worthy' of participating in film festivals, typically reserved for the 'elite' connoisseurs of the art of filmmaking. She offers us a glimpse of how articulations of linguisticism pervade in the discourses and spaces of film festivals, offering observations from a recent incident at an international film festival, hosted in Kerala, where the marginalities were being drawn through the permission of participation, which in contrast to being democratic and free of constraints, were based on one's knowledge of a language, namely English. For scholars, who critically engage with issues such as language, linguistic identities

and linguistic discrimination, this paper therefore, could serve as a case study to explore the dynamics of linguistic discriminations in a concrete manner, thereby extending the field of analysis from institutional places, such as schools and higher education spaces to quasi-institutional places such as film festivals.

It is the conviction, insistence, and criticality of the contributors of this issue for engaging with practices that are spread across disparate spaces, yet concern the 'public', either as an individual student, teacher, artist, a citizen or a scholar who is mapping the transitions of shifting paradigms, who is archiving the contestations of marginality or who is studying the significations of textuality, in its myriad forms in her everyday life. We, therefore, invite the readers to read, examine and deliberate!

**Rolla Das**

Issue Editor