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Editorial

The angst of the youth has gripped several countries in recent months, with these movements collectively categorised as Gen Z protests. Protesters have taken to the streets demanding better governance and solutions to the challenges of the present, reflecting an apparent distrust of established norms. While only some of these movements have succeeded in overthrowing governments, the frustration and impatience are spreading and finding resonance across different parts of the world. There is a palpable sense of insecurity among young people, with the prospect of secure employment and a stable life remaining elusive for much of the current generation. This was the promise of capitalism a few decades ago, and the churning we witness today suggests a breakdown of that arrangement. While these issues are undoubtedly significant, are we witnessing a radically different form of organising and a complete break from the past? Although we have yet to find a definitive answer to this question, this issue of Artha Journal of Social Sciencesoffers a small indication of what may lie ahead.

This issue of Artha features three research articles, one perspective, and a book review. Like the previous issue, the book review examines a work of fiction that paints a broader picture of the Korean peninsula in the twentieth century. It draws a clear parallel between the workers' protests of the past and those of the present, offering a lens through which to view the changes unfolding around us. The research articles raise several important questions: how the folklore of Kashmir has been instrumental in shaping the region's identity, and why such readings differ from more conventional scholarship; how gender attitudes have remained deeply entrenched despite the evolution of children's play over time; and why a closer examination of measurement indicators is necessary before assessing progress towards gender equality. The perspective article draws our attention to the importance of stimulating classroom discussions that encourage us to rethink diplomatic relations in the contemporary era. We offer summaries of the contributions below.

Folklore has a unique place in academic research. It has often been used to study knowledge that existed before modern times, specifically as a set of stories that put together several superhuman events. However, Nakuleswar Mukherjee argues that this interpretation of folklore is only partial if we examine the Kashmiri landscape. In his article titled "Narratives of Identity: Folk Consciousness and Cultural Formation in Kashmir," the author describes how folklore goes beyond its function of being a collection of outdated knowledge to giving voice to the syncretic traditions of the place. A careful reading of various stories that form the folklore shows that "oral

narratives remain central to preserving regional culture amid globalisation and crisis, functioning as repositories of collective memory and cultural resilience." The nature of folklore in transcending religious divisions and expressing an egalitarian future has provided a consciousness for a shared identity to emerge in Kashmir. This speciality of folklore is juxtaposed with a more conventional reading of folklore by the author, bringing out its distinctive facet in Kashmir.

Play has received limited attention in the Indian context, particularly regarding its evolution across generations. Farah M. K. studies how children's play has changed through interviews with 13 mothers and 12 grandmothers in Kerala. Her study, "Children's Play: A Parental Interview-Based Exploration," examines several themes, such as children's behaviour and factors affecting their play. While the study confirms the notion that there has been a general decline in time spent by children outdoors, it is surprising to note that gendered differences have persisted across time despite better awareness. It seems that parents get trapped in the decision to get "appropriate" toys for children, and in the process reinforce gendered stereotypes. The anxiety about playing in unfamiliar circumstances has also resulted in parents limiting the scope of play for children. While there is an agreement on the importance of play, it needs further work from the part of policymakers to facilitate play among children, taking into account the myriad factors influencing the nature of play among children.

Rashmi Sehgal Thukral's article "A Mathematical Framework to Characterise Disparity in the Female-to-Male LFPR Ratio across States of India" offers a nuanced approach to measuring gender equality. Although the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) advocate using the Female-to-Male Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) as an indicator of progress in gender equality, its undifferentiated use will not help us capture the real picture. A deeper examination shows that the factors that affect females' work differ, indeed, by location. Using state-level data and employing machine learning methods, the author argues for the case of distinguishing between urban and rural areas within states. This also implies a method of grouping states different from the usual geographical-proximity-based clustering. This new method of characterising gender equality is in line with the literature that relates female labour force participation with changes in income levels.

Muzi Shoba's interesting piece, published as a Perspective, reflects on a student's question from a Global Studies classroom. The question was "Does the relationship between South Africa and China represent bilateralism, multilateralism, or both?" While the author says it can be considered as both, the peculiarities of engagements between the two countries are hard to miss. Their ties have grown over the years, but these two emerging countries

have also participated in the larger multilateral organisations (such as BRICS), which have shaped their interactions with each other. This complex interplay between the countries makes it extremely difficult to draw a clear box around their diplomatic relationship. The insights for South Africa and China are also valid for other developing countries, which are jostling for space in a seemingly multi-polar world.

The last piece of our issue is a book review by Divya Pradeep. Hwang Sok-Yong's magisterial Mater 2-10, a novel on Korea from its Japanese occupation to the present, is an intimate study of workers' struggles in the peninsula. While the deep wounds of war and colonialism changed South Korea in the last seven decades, the ignominy faced by workers serving the interests of profit is common for both time periods. There is scant recognition for the workers who have forged the nation in "sweat and struggle." Along with the struggle arises the question of organising. The past workers were diligent in forming concrete organisations that had to withstand severe repression. There is a distinction drawn between being discreet and having an organisation, where the latter is important for the former to happen under hostile conditions. The continuity with the present, where workers' collective decision-making is emphasised, provides some valuable lessons in organising to dissenters. The novel, as the reviewer points out, is not only about political activity. It gives space for exploring relationships, families, and the women who are often invisibilised in struggles for the common good.

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