

## Editorial

Dear Readers,

It is with a deep sense of gratitude and joy that we place before you this issue of JTREL (Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature). As with most issues of our journal, I hope you will find the offerings in this edition an interesting mix of literary and critical research pieces. As we all pass through perhaps the toughest phase of our lives due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, we are grappling with turbulent, traumatic times. In many ways, literature and stories seem like a key device to cope with the uncertainties of life which have worsened gravely in this troubled era.

In this spirit and mindset, one hopes that reading the articles offered in JTREL will help to lessen the doom and gloom surrounding us. As the numbers of COVID-19 rise relentlessly, more and more people seem to succumb to feelings of anxiety, fear, and helplessness. One believes that literature and stories can help to provide a soothing balm, a calming influence amid the disquiet of current developments.

We would like to thank all our contributors for enriching this issue with their submissions. Of the five articles included, Divya S. and S. Chitra's analysis of a novel written in the 1880s - *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* – is the first in order of appearance. Written by Krupabai Satthianadhan, this particular novel has a special historical significance as it is widely regarded as the first autobiographical novel by an Indian woman writing in English. The novel as a literary genre in India is largely influenced by the Victorian novels of the west and the authors argue that Krupabai's novel reflects the deep influence of English literature. While employing the narrative techniques of realism, the novel grapples with a wide range of social issues of the nineteenth century and addresses the woman's question with considerable finesse.

The next paper by Rama Naga Hanuman Alapati is an attempt to probe the institutions of science and religion in the celebrated novel, *Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut, considered by many as one of the greatest writers of post-war America. In a perceptive reading of the novel, Rama Naga reflects on the multiple layers of the richly crafted novel and depicts how Vonnegut conceals a complex texture beneath a deceptively simple surface using parody and the dehumanization projected in the novel.

Moumita Dey's article provides a thoughtful take on Thomas Hardy and RK Narayan in the context of one well-known novel from each of them, namely *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Guide*. Dey's reading points out the similarities between the social system/ structure/ fabric of 'Wessex architect' Hardy and 'Malgudi craftsman' Narayan. She also analyses the struggles, innovations and changing cultures of their respective societies. One remarkable change which is explicit is the emergence of the modern woman in their narratives. She highlights the portrayal of the modern, independent woman of the two societies taking Hardy's Lucetta and Narayan's Rosie as representatives.

The focus of Ashima Pandey's research paper is on the moral and ethical issues in Jane Austen's fiction. She has based her interesting study on the basic premise that Literature has an important but indirect role in moral education. In addition, the author argues that literature helps readers to develop and practice the central ethical skill of empathizing with other peoples' lives and perspectives.

The final paper in the current issue, entitled 'Gender and Communication in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out*', by Abha Pandey and Mona Gupta attempts to address major theories of language along with gender and traces its applicability in Manjula Padmanabhan's play, *Lights Out*. As is a well-known, gender differentiation permeates all spheres of life and the domain of language is no exception. In the early 1970's, linguists and psychologists began to give great attention to dominance and differences in male and female communication. Robin Lakoff, a well-known linguist, found links between language and gender in her book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) in which her theory affirms that there is a distinct male and a female language. Through their study of expressions in the language spoken by male and female characters in *Lights Out*, the authors reflect on linguistic features which can be used to redress gender traits.

Hope the papers presented in this issue provide you all with an enriching experience. Before concluding may I request you all to keep sending in your contributions for we would like to cover every major genre and style of writing in our journal. We welcome and will happily publish in JTREL all interesting and insightful articles on themes connected with English literature – and we look forward to being overwhelmed by your response!!

Warm regards,  
**Shaila Mahan**  
Editor-in-Chief, JTREL