

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

The world today is ever-changing and that too at phenomenal pace. Never before has human life been as challenging and chaotic as in the 21st century. In the net-linked world that surrounds us with a constant cacophony from different media, a question often gets asked of hapless literature teachers - does literature now have any significance for human society?

This simple query hides a complex reality. It stems from the confusion that has arisen due to the countless technological advancements that have grown all around us in recent years. As the charms of technological changes and our hyper-linked world reshape global society, what needs to be cognized is that the way we read has been revolutionised. Given the increasing popularity of the Kindles, eBooks, and online reading, an impression gets created that technology has overwhelmed literature. However, as astute observers underline, the essence of storytelling and the effect it has on our lives hasn't wavered or minimised.

Literature is the very foundation of human life. It places an emphasis on themes that range from human tragedies to tales of joy/sorrow and the ever-popular quest for love. While it is physically written in words by an author, the literary piece comes alive in the readers' mind and imagination. As such, literature enables people to see through the lenses of others and provides a veritable looking glass into the world as others view it. It is a journey that is inscribed in words and pages but is powered by the imagination of the reader.

As the dynamic world around us moves at dizzying pace, the significance of literature is only getting enhanced. Literature reflects human nature in a way that helps us to learn and relate to others. This is particularly important in today's tech-driven society where people are becoming increasingly detached from human interaction through iPhones, Face Time, and social media.

Literature is something that will never change in the way it makes us feel, whether it's on paper in a book or as an eBook. Reading quality literature enables human beings to understand situations from multiple perspectives. The literary lens stimulates in people the ability to see the world with a pair of fresh eyes and inspires reflection on their own lives. As the stresses/strains of our tech-crazy world make human life more complicated, literature as a soothing balm has an eternal appeal and significance.

With this perspective, our endeavour is to provide an enriching literary diet through JTREL – and the current issue provides a healthy mix of research pieces on a variety of literary genres.

In the opening paper, entitled 'Revisiting Partition through Manto's Short Stories, "A Tale of 1947" and "The Great Divide", Githanajali Thapar discusses how Saadat Hasan Manto depicts partition pangs and questions of identity that tore apart what had otherwise been a harmonious subcontinent. Thapar explores the socio-political context in the two selected stories of Manto in a bid to understand whether Manto was being subversive in portraying the mass hysteria and bestiality of communal violence of the partition that tore apart the Indian subcontinent which had cherished a composite culture that was nourished over centuries.

The next paper, on 'Feminism in the Writings of Kamala Das' by Sailakshmi Chavan traces

the evolution of female consciousness through some of Das' writings, like her autobiography, My Story, 'The Old Playhouse and Other Poems', 'A Doll for the Child Prostitute', 'An Introduction' and 'A Widow's Lament'. Chavan contends that the works of Kamala Das reveal the poet's own life-long journey as a woman for love, freedom and self-expression and her quest reflects the conflict that most women undergo, oppressed as they are by patriarchy and the contrasting pulls and pressures of tradition and modernity.

In her thought provoking paper, entitled 'Hitting the Right Note: Shubha Mudgal's Stories', Bandana Chakrabarty provides an exploration of the eccentricities, rivalries and foibles prevalent in the world of contemporary Indian classical music. As a well-known and versatile exponent of Hindustani classical music, Mudgal utilizes satire in this debut collection of stories where music often becomes just a means of making money or getting fame in a musician's life-journey.

In the next article, Anshoo Sharma provides an interesting analysis on the path-breaking play "A Friends Story" by Vijay Tendulkar. Her paper deals with the sensitive and explosive theme of homosexuality explored in Tendulkar's creation. Sharma peels open the various layers of the play and delves into the emotional, psychological, and social impact that homophobia has on Indian society. The analysis is centred on the central lesbian character Mitra and how she boldly wades against the tide but ultimately gives in as both family and friends fail her on multiple fronts.

The final paper looks at 'space' and 'time' as concepts that shape a narrative. Taking the case of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*, Charul Jain and Arghya Chakrabarty look at how the narrative reconstructs the notions of 'self' and 'identity' through space and time. The authors contend that Tilottamma, the novel's central protagonist, explores and constructs her identity through a space filled with imagination which continuously shifts between the 'real world' and the 'narrative world'.

We conclude this issue with Prof S. Mohanraj providing an insightful review of an Alan Maley edited volume entitled, *The New Normal*. With this thoughtful take, we are starting a new Book Review section which will hopefully become a regular and valuable feature of JTREL.

Warm regards,
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