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EDITORIAL

October 2020 will conclude the two-year celebration of Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary. Over the years, we have recalled Gandhi, re-examined his ideas, and have acknowledged his influence and importance in the present day as well. However, the present day shows little sign of having imbibed anything from him. It is true that he was no God, or that he had the right answers, but what we need today is his commitment to peace and non-violence.

One initiative is by Ekta Parishad, the Gandhi-inspired social movement. It has planned several grassroots actions that link autonomous actions, a concept Gandhi called *swaraj*. One of the biggest campaigns is *Jai Jagat*, a march over more than 10,000 kilometres. It began at Rajghat on 2 October 2019, and will culminate in Geneva on 25 September 2020. The attempt is to renew the concept of Gandhi's *swaraj* in peoples'-based development in India and elsewhere. A fascinating and ambitious project which one hopes will go some distance in reviving faith in non-violence.

In this issue, we have included a section of three articles on Gandhi, all of which demonstrate both the complexity and relevance of his thought.

One aspect of Gandhi's life that has earned him many detractors is his relationship with women. However, most will agree that he believed in empowering women and encouraged them to participate in the freedom movement. What was it that endeared Gandhi to women? This is the question that Purwa Bharadwaj and Alka Ranjan address in their absorbing essay.

A prolific writer, Gandhi wrote in both English and Gujarati, and on a vast range of subjects. With examples from prominent English language papers, Anjana Sharma details Gandhi's understanding of and relationship with print culture, and his recognition of the power that went with it. I could not help but wonder what Gandhi would have made of the current media scenario.

Gangeya Mukherji's paper explores Gandhi's notion of the political. While many see it as unworkable, his concept of ethical politics was prescient, given the political climate today.

The rest of the papers engage with a variety of interesting ideas. The lead article is a historical analysis of the rise of Wahhabism in India. Ravi Mishra traces this from the syncretic form of Islam of the 16th century to the puritanical Wahhabism that first manifested in Arabia in the 18th century.

Sonia Sikka too looks at religion, but from a different perspective—religion as faith, identity and philosophy—and makes some observations about political framings of religion; again, a subject very relevant today.

Shrabani Basu tells the story of the Indian soldiers who fought in the First World War. Based on archival images and personal narratives from India and Pakistan, the essay is a moving tribute to the now forgotten army of soldiers who fought under the worst circumstances.

Politics and cinema are closely linked, be it in the time of Nehru or Modi. Partha Ghosh's article demonstrates the link between the two concepts, and argues convincingly that cinema draws its inspiration from politics, and politics uses the medium for its messaging.

Ratnottama Sengupta focuses on the 'unsung dialects through cinema'. In a country identified with diversity, she shows the extent of diversity in languages.

What makes a terrorist? Veena Ravikumar attempts to find an answer through a reading of the psychological and political profiles of Adolf Hitler, Osama bin Laden and Anders Behring Breivik.

This issue also includes an interview. In conversation with artist Arpita Singh, Subhra Mazumdar takes us into the life and home of this multifaceted personality.

And finally, a nuanced black-and-white photo essay on the ship-breakers of Darukhana by Srinivas Kuruganti.

We hope you have enjoyed the 2019 Festival of the Arts, and look forward to the festive months ahead.



OMITA GOYAL