

Editor's Note

Unlike the earlier volumes of *Social Orbit*, this time we have given priority to the articles of budding scholars engaged in live research. They are selected mainly for their treatment of varied and interesting themes having contemporary importance. Ranging from social exclusion to gender equations, these articles present a vivid panorama of socially meaningful issues. As all the articles do not belong to a single or related theme, a survey encompassing each and every one of them has not been attempted here; it is not only not easy but would be obviously annoying too.

A very important question that has been upsetting us is the efficacy of our academic endeavour focusing on research. By posting the results of recent research, we hope to drive the academic community towards contemporary relevant themes. But the whole higher education sector presents a picture of steady decline in standards. Several of the reforms introduced in higher education turns out to be less and less productive. The recent academic measures aimed at achieving global standards have in fact not only failed to achieve the desired results but even reduced the existing quality of education. The case of research also is not much different. Interest in research and publication are growing steadily up but they count on quantitative gains than having a zeal for quality. Dependence on frivolous internet sources as study materials have reduced the quality of knowledge in recent times. Knowledge attained through published books and through the tedious process of library reference is getting less and less popular. Reliable materials available on the net are expensive and hence are often skipped. We are talking about serious research in circumstances like these.

This predicament is aggravated by the recent surge of irrationalism and the culture of aggressive masculinity. While in earlier times culture had a downward filtration, the current scene is to the opposite: the educated and the enlightened are being influenced by the abject aspects of popular culture. The concept of a society functioning on rationality and enlightenment has almost been given up. People are lured by the everyday and ordinary things of life. In the third world context of India where a major share of the population are set aside on

the margins of the society and who could only be emancipated through a movement combining rationality, enlightenment and radicalism, the politics of the possible, and unfortunately with the consent of the subalterns, has deterred the hopes of true emancipation.

The slow withdrawal of a rational community is reflected in the upsurge of medieval religiosity with its innumerable and obsolete customs and practices. Irrationality coupled with a spirit of crusade has generated a warring mentality among religions towards others. Despite medieval in their outlook, even the exponents of religion justify their own ideology with the help of modern science. On the other hand, modern science and technology, which are being controlled by market forces, compromises with institutional religion. While the role of science was instrumental in modernizing religious ideologies and institutions, and in bringing about enlightenment and the spirit of renaissance, the forces of postmodernity lead the world in a different direction by rejecting the very concept of enlightenment. Moreover, the importance modernity had given to the individual is being replaced by group identity of the postmodern times. Ethnicity, community, religion, gender, family, locality, everything get a facelift. Most of these segments, especially those of religion and community, take their energy from their medieval roots, a tendency which has been doing much harm to civil society in a third world context. Capitalism promotes science primarily for commercial interests and only very cautiously for social advantage.

The above situation reiterates the importance of social science research. To be silent is to compromise with the forces of reaction. It is important to bring forth the contradictions involved in social movements and processes and to expose the varied interests associated with the norms of social behaviour. That doesn't mean all research be oriented towards negative criticism; anything having progressive traits needs to be studied and interpreted.