

## Editor's Note

Social science research has been undergoing substantial transformation for some time, some of the changes are crucial for the serious and the curious minds. One important aspect of this is the narrowing down of boundaries between various social science disciplines advancing healthy interdisciplinary dialogues and common platforms of methodological perspectives. Anthropology has become the hub of social science research, promoting search for data from the 'field' and for various kinds of tools of oral/visual communications. The increasing interest in presentism, manifested through various means, such as, for instance, a concern for cultural studies – perceiving cultural symbols as extant images of traditions – as well as a tendency to view the past through the present eye, makes everyday experiences and memories useful devices for academic inquiry. Even in history, which is heavily oriented towards the past, there has been a growing interest in the study of the recent, instead of the remote, past as well as an overt drive to assess the past from the present predicaments.

If these kinds of developments are, to a great extent, positive and are greatly welcomed, there are certain other things which are highly disappointing. Notwithstanding the growing interest in research, increasing methodological sophistication, and the resultant passion for publication, appended by a flood of journals, both in print and online, there is very little improvement in terms of quality – to be frank, it is declining day by day. We have long been talking about such a debacle but the situation continues to worsen – which, however, does not hinder the true intelligentsia to articulate themselves. The unscrupulous race for API scores, anticipating placements and promotions, supported by policies leading to liberalization in higher education, has transformed the field of publication into a lucrative market in which even foreign publishers are potent competitors. The UGC is now an ardent supporter of the policy of pay-and-publish, as is evidenced by its list of approved journals, which is framed by including a sizable number of poor and substandard journals, ignoring the numerous, highly placed, reputed, publications of the print world. This has in fact become a vicious circle in which ambitious and unscrupulous investors seek out substantial

source of income exploiting the callous and lethargic attitude of the amateur researchers who are keen to identify a space for themselves in the world of letters through the backdoors. Reports have now started coming out on Indian higher education as being caught up in the web of fake journals ready to publish anything on payment; 'pay and publish' is the emerging culture of the academic-publishing sphere.

Amidst these conflicting tendencies, there are further developments which certainly bewilder us – the gradual eclipse of the print media and the colossal growth of the online world. Among the western countries the web world has almost replaced the print media and a similar trend is sweeping the Indian scene, the impact of which will soon be visible. Journals like Social Orbit are also compelled to conform to this inevitable transition. In the west, however, serious research and reading continues to dominate the academia, even in its online incarnation, but in India while lay people of all hues are caught up in the whatsapp app mania, the educated are fascinated by the Wikipedia culture – lowering the intellectual standards to the bottommost level. Reading as a habit is declining among students and teachers and so the developing online culture seems to eliminate even the existing class of scholarly genre. This ongoing leveling process would make us dependents of the west in academic matters. Thus, we are moving towards a quandary in which a deteriorating quality of research and publication proceed along with a progressively declining size of the reading community.

Barring these grave concerns, a seriously edited journal, or a well written volume too, has its own space in the academy and could do something substantial in promoting ideas and attitudes. Social Orbit has been uncompromising in keeping up this spirit – right from the point of selection of articles, through revising, and till accepting/rejecting. Cultivating a research culture is very difficult in the context of an affiliated college; but as an ideal, we have been striving hard to achieve it. The nature and content of the articles of the present volume would reveal how they reflect the aforesaid concerns; they are from the best scholars in diverse disciplines and are the products of meticulous research. We feel proud of being placed within the bounds of a true academic culture.