

Editorial: Predicament of a House Journal

During the past one year I tried a couple of things to keep the journal doing better. One, I proposed a change in its editorial advisory board with the hope that I would be able to utilize local resources more effectively than those located in distant lands as all members of the outgoing editorial advisory board were. It was difficult for the board members to meet even once annually and discuss the problems and prospects of the journal. I am glad that the proposal was accepted by the University Publication Committee. Two, I made an appeal through email to all faculty members of the university to encourage their research scholars to write for the journal and send me reviews of the books they read recently, as I was finding it difficult to sustain the existing practice of giving away my personal collections to the reviewers. But the response to my appeals was pathetically poor and the few manuscripts that were submitted for consideration of publication were mostly rejected by the referees, forcing me to include an endowment lecture in this issue of the journal, which was not refereed and which was quite against the policy of the journal that I am supposed to uphold.

I started researching on why the university journal was receiving such poor response of scholars in general and the university faculty members in particular. After a few months, the following three factors emerged. One, that this is a house journal the trappings of what were not clear to me until I probed further into the subject. Broadly, any article published in a house journal was considered to be of no value. The selection committee members, I was told quite frequently, did not attach any importance to publication in the house journal even if it was an internationally refereed journal, as our university journal is. Why would anyone write for the university journal if the university professors themselves did not attach any value to such publication? Why would they not try and get their articles published in what they consider as top notch journals in their own respective disciplines? Why would they not try and get their articles published in journals with known impact factor, especially when the new UGC guidelines clearly state this and universities have started asking the candidates

questions on the impact factor of the journals they have published their articles in. As we all know, impact factor is one of the most debatable issues in all universities across the world, particularly for scholars in humanities and social sciences where the idea is absolutely vague as much as it is new. For instance, *Economic and Political Weekly* published from Mumbai is perhaps the most widely circulated and referred journal in social sciences anywhere in the world and scholars highly value any publication in this journal. But this is not a refereed journal and no one knows its impact factor! Yet, impact factor, no matter what it means, is the new *mantra* to decide who is the most influential and most saleable in the academic job market. A house journal, no matter how well produced, appears to be an outdated concept in this highly globalised academic market.

Two, most members of the university academic community rightly assume that our journal has very limited circulation outside the university. This is primarily because the journal was never brought out regularly in the past. The very name of the journal was changed two times in the past and both the production and circulation were sometimes badly affected when a new dean of the School of Social Sciences took over as the editor of the journal as well, following a certain convention in our university. For all these reasons and more the drive for collecting subscriptions from various universities and academic institutions of the country was never there and the same is still very weak. Incidentally, it may continue to remain weak if some kind of institutional framework is not built around the journal. As of now, there is no separate budget for posting the journal to subscribers, no staff to maintain records and correspondences with the contributors, and so on. All this makes printing of the journal in time difficult and at times even impossible, which affects both circulation and credentials of the journal.

Three, that this is a university journal is not yet internalized by all faculty members. As a result many of them, especially those in “science” departments, consider this journal as a social sciences and humanities journal, which it actually was called earlier, and do not feel connected to it or inspired to contribute their articles to it. But even if they published I doubt if such publications would fetch any academic credence to the authors in such departments because it is

a house journal and its impact factor is not known. It however has an ISSN number and is indexed in the Guide to Indian Periodical Literature.

I take this opportunity to request my fellow colleagues in this university and elsewhere to give this journal a chance to grow. I am not interested in mere survival of the journal. So if you want the journal to grow please do respond to my fervent appeals.

In this volume, I first present to you a series of three lectures under a common theme titled “Transformational Process in Northeast India” delivered as the 14th Dr. Verrier Elwin Endowment Lectures delivered by a former vice-chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh. These lectures capture, anecdotally or otherwise, the process of transformation as well as continuities that the tribes of the region are undergoing in terms of their relationship with their physical environment as well as their tribal and non-tribal neighbours. Those who could not attend the lectures personally would benefit immensely by reading the edited transcript of his lectures presented here.

The second article by Professor C. R. Agera draws our attention to the almost unparalleled cultural, biological and linguistic diversities that mark the region called Northeast India. More importantly he ably shows the inter-relationships and inter-dependence between them and how erosion of one kind of diversity can clearly lead to the erosion of another kind of diversity. The third article by Dr. Subrat K. Nanda convincingly argues that globalization has not been able to erase, as expected by some scholars, ethno-nationalisms from a region like Northeast India. The fourth article by Dr. Chopfoza Catherine discusses the trajectory of tribal development in India in general and Manipur in particular besides highlighting some important publications on the subject. The fifth and last article argues why Sikkim must go for an integrated tourism policy for generating employment opportunities in future and how the potential of the government to do so is already saturated.

At the end I have included book reviews by Professor D. K. Nayak and Dr. Geetika Ranjan.

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