

Editorial

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“I’m more frightened than interested by artificial intelligence – in fact, perhaps fright and interest are not far away from one another. Things can become real in your mind, you can be tricked, and you believe things you wouldn’t ordinarily. A world run by automatons doesn’t seem completely unrealistic anymore. It’s a bit chilling.” - Gemma Whelan

Artificial Intelligence has earned itself a dog-eared page in this digital age. It is neither new nor is it a recent phenomenon, it has been in usage in one form or the other since the 1950s, but the hurtling speed at which this has been amplified in recent years, is largely due to advances in technology and the explosion of data, pivotal for training AI models. It is a no brainer that its impact has been large and encompassing, no matter where one stands in the ethical debate that ensues.

AI is, at its base, a double-edged knife that jabs both ways, a knife that is rusty and will corrode and infect. The spheres in which it can be used are so wide that it now is impossible to imagine a life, social or professional without it. The rapid advancements of AI systems have changed the way individuals consume and process information. Usage of AI in daily life has increasingly become more and more normalized, to the point where people are replacing genuine human connection with their personalized AI chatbots. Chatbots that will provide them with no dissent and endless comfort, nothing that will challenge them or force them to think differently or even critically. Instead these will reinforce their opinions and thought processes, no matter how dangerous or troubling they may be.

AI has not only impacted connection, but also poses a threat to art, which transcends

culture while actively shaping it. Art, which is a myriad of human emotions, a whirlwind of feeling, of life and everything that is worth living. In its place, AI punches out tasteless pieces, with a distinct lack of flair and diversity, pieced together from other Frankensteins of human behaviour, a vicious cycle of recycled and reduced thoughts.

Even in the professional sphere, AI algorithms have started being audited before they are used for hiring. We have entered an era where before getting hired an AI model will read through a resume which was also written using AI and will accept or reject on the basis of the presence of keywords. Being a tool, AI can be easily misused. It functions using the data that is fed to it. Inherent biases in the data fed, in algorithms created will naturally lead to perpetuation of structured discrimination, and marginalisation of sections of the population.

The detrimental impact of artificial intelligence on the increasingly fragile environment is another aspect that is critical to the levels of AI adoption. Mushrooming data centres that house AI servers not only produce electronic waste but are also large consumers of water, a scarce natural resource. Furthermore, they rely on critical minerals and rare elements, which are often mined unsustainably and also use enormous amounts of electricity, spurring the emission of planet-warming greenhouse gases. Decibel levels about AI taking away jobs are at an all-time high however, it is now established that job profiles are changing and those who do not upskill to use and understand AI are likely to be left behind in today's overly competitive job market.

This issue of Indian Journal of Social Enquiry looks ahead and also studies the past to reinforce the foundations of progress and development. The opening article by Sidharth Mishra, Sumedha Dhasmana & Praveen Kumar Singh brings to the fore the integration of theatre in education with event management curriculum by examining case studies and practices at the Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication (VSJMC), Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, Delhi. While this article treads novel and effective pedagogies, Saguna in the next article titled, 'From Regional Commander to Imperial Figure: Reviewing Zorawar Singh's Contribution to the Rise of the Dogra State' resurrects and examines existing literature to throw new perspectives on Zorawar Singh and Himalayan geopolitics.

Shikha Chauhan in 'Eroding Trust, Emerging Voices: Youth and Democratic Legitimacy in Nepal and Sri Lanka' not only delves into the trajectory of democracy in Nepal and

Sri Lanka but makes a strong case for a multi-dimensional engagement with Gen-Z to reinforce democracy. Re-examining the past to posit the future continues in 'Salt Satyagraha to the Chipko movement: Ecofeminist Readings of Women's Mobilization on Resource Politics in India' by Aastha. In an insightful comparative study of two key socio-political movements, she challenges patriarchal mores and undergirds the proactive role of women as leaders and mobilisers of political movements.

Ajad Singh, Rakesh Kumar & Saumya Shukla examine the fiscal impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in Gujarat. An in-depth analysis of fixed time periods leads to pertinent findings and suggestions for enhanced performance. For our literature enthusiasts, we have an interesting and engaging article by Aishwarya Jha titled, 'Bleeding Green: War, Poetry and Ecology in Select Poems from Northeast India'. Jha's analysis of the poetry from the conflict-ridden northeastern states of India makes a strong case for adoption of poetry as a mode of creative expression and representation. This issue closes with a review of Community Conserved Areas in India, one of the oldest forms of ecosystem governance by Anand Kumar, Preety Sharma & Shikhar Kumar. Not only do they chart its historiography and challenges but also make pertinent suggestions for its sustainable existence as community-driven, context-specific, and rooted in indigenous knowledge systems.

We hope that the articles resonate and benefit our readers, and lead to research in some of the key areas highlighted in this issue. We continue with our endeavour to advocate and expand the scope of critical social enquiry.