

Censorship and Literature: Introductory Responses

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The Oxford English Dictionary defines censorship as “the suppression or prohibition of any parts of books, films, news, etc. that are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security.”¹ There is at least a two-fold meaning in this definition: first, certain factors give rise to censorship including obscenity, security, etc., and second, there is a governing body that imposes censorship. It is understandable from this definition that this body may be in most cases an official body, careful of the interests of the nation-state. But then, is this body, although official, free of partial or sectional interests? To rephrase, does censorship carry with it a dominant aspect of the political interests of the ruling party or can it also be effected by the mobilized interest of various groups, sections, and parties? The second body of actors in this case is important as factors that give rise to censorship, such as obscenity or security, are relative in their importance for sections of society. For example, certain scenes in a film, dealing in plain nudity for commercial purposes, or offensive to racial harmony and the freedom of practising sexual orientation, may be retained without even calling for a restrictive certificate, whereas certain scenes in another film, speaking of nudity as part of racial or religious history of a nation, may face the insulting bars of a censor in the name of security and communal harmony. What is censored is usually determined by who wants it and for what purpose. Thus, a discussion of censorship must give space to the question of race, class, caste, and the dominant political interests of a nation. It must also take into account the aspect of group pressure or what is known as the “unofficial ban.”

This issue tries to engage with the multifarious aspects of censorship, from gender, law, extra-legal acts and spaces, to religion, race, culture, ethnicity, text, among others. As we

made clear in our call for papers for this issue, we wanted to focus on literature; but we have also been asking for a broader definition of literature, where the literary is not understood only as a field of textual new criticism, but also that which takes part in the cultural, the social, and the humanities to constitute a broader perceptive-analytical domain of the aesthetic. We believe that the essays and various methods of approaching the burning issue of censorship will help to establish the topic in a broader geo-social and political field and encourage useful traffic between disciplines. Our aim is to situate the issue in its contemporary social and political landscape while drawing implications from such. The first part engages with the recent cases of censorship and intolerance in India and raises questions on what it means for the practices of democracy and tolerance, while the second part engages broadly with the philosophical and literary underpinnings of such implications for democracy and political correctness.

Censorship and Indian media have had a long history. The modern understanding of censorship, the regulation of free speech and circulated material in public came into existence with the advent of British colonialism in India, in its paradoxical championing of Enlightenment values of reason, free speech and liberty in the metropolises and the systematic undermining of such in the colonies (Soli Sorabjee, 1977; Kaur and Mazzarella 11-13). Post-independent India had the difficult prerogative of striking a balance between the constitutional right to free speech and the curbing of abuse or misuse of such in public. Thus article 19 of the Indian constitution which pertains to the “protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech etc.” has in clause (1) “All citizens shall have the right (a) to freedom of speech and expression.” But in the same article in clause (2) it is mentioned that “Nothing in sub-clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interests of 4 [the

sovereignty and integrity of India,] the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.]”²

It is not very difficult to understand that the issues that are mentioned here, the sovereignty and integrity of India or aspects of morality, defamation, decency, etc., as important factors for the restriction of free speech can be implemented on any act or speech-act. In that sense, freedom of speech appears to have a contingent value, an illusory promise, as it can be suspended in the interests of the nation at any time. It is further interesting to note that the state plays an important role in curbing free speech as it may take recourse to its political, economic, and cultural interests for a justification. The state in this case often appears through the diktats of the ruling government. There are competing groups within the government for the exercise of power, who often impose restrictions on the practice of certain caste-based or religion-based habits and rituals or threaten people and groups for intellectual or cultural production that may jeopardize these groups’ political interests. These practices are grouped or understood as an “unofficial ban” which often leads to terrible results for the victims. Kaur and Mazzarella in *Censorship in South Asia* (2009) tell us that the Supreme Court, which is the highest judicial forum and the final court of appeal in India, has also acknowledged the wide power of these “unofficial bans” (6). This part attempts to show cases, specifically from the literary-social field, to suggest how the phenomenon of the unofficial ban has made its presence felt in contemporary India.

On August 20, 2013, around 7.30 am, Narendra Dabholkar, a 68 year old long-time activist against superstition, black magic and caste-related violence in Maharashtra, who founded the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti (MANS, “Committee for Eradication of Superstition in Maharashtra”), was murdered by two gunmen riding a motorcycle.³ One and a half years later, on 16 February 2015, a veteran member of the

Communist Party of India, again from Maharashtra, and a long-time activist against caste hierarchy and superstition, Govind Pansare, was shot by two gunmen early in the morning when he was returning from a morning walk with his wife. He died four days later on the 20th of February.⁴ A few months later, on 30th August 2015, the widely known Kannada scholar of Vachana philosophy, who was also a Sahitya Akademi Award winner for his literary, philosophical and sociological work, MM Kalburgi, was shot dead at his residence by two gunmen riding a motorbike early in the morning.⁵

If we notice carefully, there are certain similarities in these cases: the victims are all old men who have long campaigned for social justice and communicational rationality. It was their work on caste and community, ritual practices and enlightenment values that drew the ire of a certain extremist section of society. It is also to be noted that they were all killed early in the morning, in broad daylight, and in each case by two gunmen riding a bike. There are a couple of implications to be drawn from these events: First, that any critical inquiry into the normative reception of Hindu scriptural laws and values runs the risk of death. The Hindu customs and rituals have been used, reused, modified for generations and ages for the interest of rulers, the state, for an empire, or a ruling government.⁶ The caste-hierarchy, which is so prominent in Hindu social life and also to a large extent which determines the political-electoral implications and consequences, has widely gone through these interest-based modifications. Despite a strong effort by the State (not to forget though that the state is a complex and fraught term) and the Supreme Court, the social and economic conditions of the Dalits or Mahadalits have hardly had a “profitable” change.⁷ Thus, despite legal and policy-oriented measures, the “social” seems to stand strong and take power over the legal. Caste-hierarchy remains a reality and any resistance to or criticism of it invites extra-legal measures, which include hate mails and phone calls, burning of effigies, books, and manuscripts, to lynching and even death threats.⁸ All of these are categorized here in the

name of unofficial banning. This has been a long practised custom in India, but what strikes us about the recent cases is the extremist step of assassinating the person raising questions on caste and social customs. This compels a rethinking of the concept and practice of democracy. Are such cases an anomaly within democracy or does the institutional structure of democracy call for its double, the state of exception? Secondly, these people have all been murdered in broad daylight by people wielding gun on motorbikes. These cannot be called assassinations in the strictest sense because there is no secrecy associated with these acts of killing. The murdered are killed in the morning, in public spaces, amongst people. The victims are seen here as the most vulnerable subjects, those who can be disposed of at any time. This begs of us a re-thinking of what constitutes the public sphere in India, especially in relation to censorship, intolerance, and murder. Are the scepticisms and protests of scholars and activists against a dominant praxis, understood as Hinduism-from-above, so powerful that the protesters are needed to be murdered? Is this a strategy of choking all voices of dissent through a spectacle of violence and fear-mongering in public? What specific implication does it hold for the constitutional right to practising secularism and tolerance, while promoting diversity?

Let us add another case to substantiate the arguments here. Perumal Murugan, a Tamil writer from India, who has written six novels and won numerous literary awards, announced the death of his literary self on a social media website in January, 2015. His writings are known for their intimate exploration of caste and ritual related violence in Hindu communities. Such explorations have not gone unnoticed and he has long been threatened and pressurized by the Hindu caste-extremists for his treatment of social issues. The pressures however mounted high with the publication of his last known work, *Madhorubhagan* (published in 2010 and translated into English as *One-Part Woman* in 2014). He received threats calls and faced assaults and public humiliation to such an extent that on a particular

day he had to declare on Facebook that "Perumal Murugan, the writer is dead. As he is no God, he is not going to resurrect himself. He has no faith in rebirth. As an ordinary teacher, he will live as P Murugan. Leave him alone."⁹

To come back to the question of murdering authors and scholars in broad daylight, this case in particular tells us that religious or caste-based extremism can go to such an extent that an author may have to declare giving up writing. This can effectively be called a metaphorical murdering of the self. A common consequence of state censorship and public fear-mongering is an imposition of authorial self-censorship where the writers or scholars either stop talking about challenging issues or reroute the traffic of representation and use indirect, circumlocutory language and devices. But not everyone does this. A writer committed to a social cause of representing history and speaking the truth in plain terms hardly manages to impose self-censorship. Unfortunately, the current situation of intolerance and unofficial banning is such that these recent cases may literally stop a writer from writing, killing his or her authorial self and murdering the project of commitment.

These two aspects, the murdering of the scholars and the metaphorical murdering of the creative writer, present a bleak prospect for inquisitive and critical studies on caste and religion. The readers here may also remember the pulping of Wendy Doniger's book *The Hindus: An Alternative History* in early 2015 which had been published in 2010. The spokesperson for Penguin India, the publisher, commented that they had decided to pulp it for fear of agitation and assault from communal and religious groups and parties.¹⁰ One can also relate this with the killing of secular bloggers in Bangladesh in the last couple of years.¹¹ Though these are not similar cases (dependent to a large extent on the legal and political nature of the constitution of the country in South Asia), the contemporaneity of the cases calls for reflecting on comparative aspects in democracy, religion, and extremism.

It should be mentioned here that holding a particular political party entirely responsible and playing blindfolded to history will not help. Though most of the cases mentioned here have taken place during the regime of Bhatia Janata Party (BJP), with its cultural ally Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (the RSS) at the helm giving diktats on custom, culture, Hinduism and Hindu laws, it should also be noted that censorship took an ominous form during the Congress regime when Indira Gandhi was in power and declared the State of Emergency between 1975 and 1977. What is terrifying in its current avatar is the popular rise of the domain of “unofficial banning,” the social taking over the legal through extra-legal measures, and the murdering of authors in broad daylight. Postmodernist criticism of the last few decades has taught us that the “author” is now dead, and that the thoughts, beliefs and values of the “reader” matter more; that there are no metanarratives or the uses of such in everyday life and practices, and that it is the celebratory time of differences, performances, and the reader’s mini-narratives. Interestingly enough, the recent cases in India endorse the situation in an ironic fashion: that the reader’s interpretative ideology has been so strong and has produced such a powerful metanarrative that the author, if not already dead, can be and will be murdered physically and metaphorically in public. Or, it may also tell us that there was hardly a celebratory space for differences, other than those limited urban spaces with academic vigilance. The metanarrative of caste supremacy and violence, which is as old as human life in India, has now taken the form of delivering justice socially. This happens in coordination with the ruling power’s cultural and political interests. This happens because Indian society is highly uneven and unequal in terms of economic, social, cultural and spatial privileges and use. It is a society that saw in 1992 both the “events” of economic liberalization and the formation of a rational subject as well as the barbaric destruction of the Babri Masjid in the name of religious supremacy and unfounded mythological and superstitious faith. Any discussion on censorship and intolerance should address the question

of this unevenness and the logic of development which is thrust onto the majority of the population, suffering from unemployment and poverty, as the long-cherished messiah.

Before concluding it should be added that there has been a strong case of solidarity in the recent past where literary writers, scholars, historians, scientists, and social scientists have come forward and voiced their disappointment and rage against the state, the government, and the Sahitya Akademi (the prestigious association of writers and intellectuals that promotes and recognizes literary merit in India), which remained silent even after its recipient MM Kalburgi was killed. More than fifty authors, scholars, and scientists have returned their Sahitya Akademi or other state-sponsored awards as a gesture of solidarity and resistance -- an act which is reminiscent of the solidarity bonds during the Emergency days in India.¹² This has received widespread attention in international and social media, bringing the issue of intolerance and censorship to an urgent focus for the government. While this is an excellent case of resistance and solidarity in the public sphere, it should also be noted that this takes place again in the sphere of the educated and the elite. It is to be hoped that such incidents are more widely discussed and disseminated so that a broader consciousness against such cases of unofficial bans and censorship grows. As scholars in the humanities, our goal will not only be to investigate the theoretical implications of these acts for democracy and secularism; this also calls for an active engagement with the issue in public, drawing public attention and helping to arrange forums and take it to the vernacular, interior, regional parts of India. This may very well start from our classrooms.

[...]

To respond to the questions of intolerance and the cult of censorship, evoked in the first part of this introduction, let me begin by interrogating the so-called democratic “virtue” of tolerance itself. Why do we need to “tolerate” the Other? Is tolerating the Other

synonymous with accepting the Other in all forms of alterity or is it about appropriating the Other from the normative position of the self? “Tolerance” is a term loaded with a power-hierarchy and to tolerate the Other is to slot him or her into a subservient place, even before any kind of interaction can begin. To use Alain Badiou’s words from *Ethics* (2001), the ethical credo of this democratic business of tolerance is as follows: “Become like me and I will respect your difference.” (25) The cult of tolerance thus remains locked up in a narcissistic logic of *recognition* where the Other is subsumed into a democratic normativism. There is more than an element of unstated censorship in this appropriative dualism of the self and the Other. It is the radical alterity of the Other that is silently censored here. In Badiou’s parlance, this is the “democratic materialism” that announces “There are only bodies and languages”, and to counter this he axiomatizes a “materialist dialectic”: “There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths” (*Logics of Worlds* 1-8). The axiom of truth introduces a dialectical triad to break the dualism of apparent pluralities of bodies and languages and exposes the importance of exception. I would argue that censorship is a mechanism, which takes away from us, this very function of registering an *exception* to the law of bodies and languages in the name of truths.

We live in a democracy of “political correctness” and it seems to me to be a major impediment to combatting censorship. The implicit moralism of political correctness is not an antidote but a *product* of censorship and it directs censorship toward self-censorship. To take note of the elementary psychoanalytic insight here, we must be sensitive to the way we *internalize* a censor. It is not for nothing that Freud uses this term as an apparatus of the unconscious or Lacan talks about the discourse of the big Other within the subject. Political correctness is one of the latest buzzwords of democratic normativism and it claims to tackle socio-political injustice by not articulating insults to social egalitarianism, as if not saying the unjust is more important than not believing in it! The democratic cult of political correctness

is built on a logic of repression where we believe in racism but articulate our false belief in multiculturalism to be politically correct in the public eye. As this practice maximizes repression, it also makes the return of the repressed more powerful than ever. The co-existence of political correctness and discriminatory violence in contemporary global democracies is a case in point. As a recent example, we can think of the flack that the white British actor Benedict Cumberbatch had to take when he used the expression “coloured” instead of “persons of colour” while talking about the lack of opportunities for black actors in Britain. He was instantly termed “racist” by the media. It is not difficult to see in this case how the moralism of political correctness makes it imperative to self-censor speech. It internalizes censorship as an implicit command of the social super-ego and blurs the gap between censorship and self-censorship. *The Spectator* blogger Nick Cohen writes in response to the Cumberbatch case:

On its own terms, political correctness is self-defeating. It drives away potential supporters, and substitutes linguistic change for social change. It replaces the desire to reform society with the desire to reform manners, and fails to understand that practiced hypocrites and seasoned manipulators can meet the demand to observe correct form with ease. Indeed, they will welcome political correctness because it gives them new opportunities to intimidate and control.

(“Political Correctness: How censorship defeats itself” n. pag.)

The problem with political correctness is that it shifts censorship from the field of speech to the field of the unspoken and this creates great confusion as to how to resist it. This unspoken censorship can be compared to the “unofficial bans” discussed in the first part.

To problematize the question of “freedom of expression,” let us look at the dialectically charged responses of the French psychoanalyst Jacques-Alain Miller and the French philosopher Jacques Rancière on the January 7, 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* killings. Much like the murders brought up in the first part of this introduction, this was also an event of gunning down 11 editors and cartoonists of the French satirical weekly newspaper in broad daylight at 11-30 am. The Islamist terrorist organization Al-Qaeda’s Yemen branch took responsibility for the event. Miller wrote a reaction-piece where he acknowledged that “Nowhere, ever, since there have been beings who speak, has it been permissible to say anything and everything.” (“The Return of Blasphemy” n. pag.) Without taking away from the heinous nature of the killings, Miller argued for a *limit* to freedom of expression because “The sacred mobilises ecstasy and fury. People kill and die for it. A psychoanalyst knows what is risked when one pokes at the ‘impossible-to-bear’ in the other.” But is political correctness the solution here? If staying within the democratic limits of freedom of expression is coterminous with political correctness, the question about the strategic choices of community building remains. Does political correctness work or is being jeeringly satirical a more effective strategy to build bridges across communities? This brings us back to the question of tolerance in a different way. How much satire can you tolerate? It is a question not so much of quality as it is of degree or scale and the judgmental yardstick is, as always, subjective and variably unstable.

Miller in a follow-up piece titled “France loves its cops” highlighted the irony that the protest against the killings was accompanied by great laudation of the French police force and their effective role-playing in the aftermath of the event, not to mention their self-sacrifice. This for Miller was a paradox. On the one hand, the French public was protesting against the terrorist act of censorship while on the other, it had to uphold the censoring Repressive State Apparatus, namely, the police. In “Charlie’s Secret,” Miller put forward the debatable

argument that the satirists were champions of the “death drive” and chose to die, instead of giving up on their freedom. We may or may not agree with this view but Miller’s paradoxical reflection on the *limit* of satirical laughter is noteworthy:

If I want to laugh at everything, it’s impossible to make fun of the freedom to laugh at everything. So the laughter stops there. We do not laugh at the freedom to laugh at everything, we take it seriously. In other words, he who wants to laugh at everything does not laugh at everything. (“Charlie’s Secret” n. pag.)

This passage conceives of an *internal* limit to the freedom of expression, which in this case has to do with satirical laughter. This again shows how a certain sense of censorship is built into the very coda of the freedom of expression. Enter Jacques Rancière.

In an interview with Éric Aeschimann, not restricted to the killings, Rancière nuanced the question of freedom of expression by distancing it from the *Charlie Hebdo* event. According to him:

Freedom of expression is a principle regulating the relations between individuals and the state, forbidding the state from preventing dissenting views being expressed. But the 7 January attack on *Charlie Hebdo* besmirched a quite different principle: namely, that you shouldn’t shoot someone because you don’t like what they have to say. And this is the principle that sets the terms of how individuals can live together and learn to respect each other. (“Jacques Rancière: The Front National’s useful idiots” n. pag.)

Rancière here makes an interesting distinction between freedom of expression as a counter-law from the place of the citizen-subjects that preserves their right to protest against the state and the *Charlie Hebdo* problematic as a desire to kill the opposing voice. For Rancière, the terrorists are outside the relational dynamic of the state and the individuals and yet the principle they violate is that of a collective social order with respect for difference. We will not go into Miller's critique of Rancière's point that "everyone" condemned the killings, among other disagreements, but Rancière's riposte ("Response to Miller") to Miller's rejoinder ("Response to Rancière") makes a crucial point: "the question of what is said and not said, as well as the question of the effects that words have, goes beyond any legal definition of freedom of expression." Without taking sides in this polemic of opinions between the psychoanalyst and the philosopher, we might conclude that this dialogue, if not duologue, highlights the ambiguity, inherent in the democratic discourse of freedom of expression. The spoken and the unspoken operate on a complex psycho-affective as well as corporeal register, which is not reducible to a rightist discourse of expression. What comes out of this war of words is a complex understanding of the *limit* to what can be said which is both internal and external to speech. This *internally externalized* and *externally internalized* limit would considerably complicate the *address* of censorship. In other words, let us now ask who is it that censors and who is it that gets censored? Can freedom of expression be an effective tool in fighting censorship if it is a product of (self-) censorship itself?

In the aesthetic field of the literary, "censor" becomes a more complex phenomenon if we see it as a support for aesthetic asceticism or self-control where sticking to a set of rules produces a literary effect. We can consider the French OULIPO as a group of poets and novelists who practiced a kind of restrained writing which meant they would refrain from doing certain things by way of consent as they subject themselves to the compositional process. George Perec's *A Void* (1969) is an example of a 300-page novel without the vowel

“e” where the exclusion was a pre-decided rule on the author’s part. In such cases, self-censorship is used as a literary strategy of experiment and if we go by Badiou’s directive, such acts of self-censoring have become politically important in the contemporary world where the imperial hegemony of global capitalism is not to censor anything:

Since it is sure of its ability to control the entire domain of the visible and the audible via the laws governing commercial circulation and democratic communication, Empire no longer censures anything. All art, and all thought, is ruined when we accept this permission to consume, to communicate and to enjoy. We should become the pitiless censors of ourselves. (“Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art” n. pag.)

Jacques Derrida in “Freud and the Scene of Writing” is aware of a different paradox of repression and censorship:

Writing is unthinkable without repression. The condition for writing is that there be neither a permanent contact nor an absolute break between strata: the vigilance and failure of censorship. It is no accident that the metaphor of censorship should come from the area of politics concerned with the deletions, blanks, and disguises of writing, even if, at the beginning of the *Traumdeutung*, Freud seems to make only a conventional, didactic reference to it. The apparent exteriority of political censorship refers to an essential censorship which binds the writer to his own writing. (*Writing and Difference* 285)

For Derrida, to write is always already to engage in censorship, as there is no writing without repression. Between the germination of a signifier in the mind and its actual tracing on paper

or on screen, there is always a bar of repression that entails modification. When Derrida was writing this, computerized inscription had not taken on its myriad dimensions, yet from a contemporary point of view, “the area of politics concerned with the deletions, blanks, and disguises of writing” has been tremendously facilitated and bolstered by the digital practices of writing. This is true for creative writers writing on screen as well, who get a subtle editorial apparatus that makes editing much easier. In our day and age, after the immense success of interactive social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and the public presence of blogs and open-access web-content, there are more writers than ever and we write more than we speak. In this Derridean prevalence of writing over speech or better still an ever-increasing writing and *writability* of speech, what is important to note is the massive space for self-censorship. When we speak, it is impossible to change the spoken text post-facto, but it is easy to change or delete anything written on blogs, Facebook walls or Twitter handles and even on chat-boxes. As we continue to write speech more than vociferating it, the missing inflections of tone and voice in the inscribed speech open up the room for self-censorship in tandem with political correctness.

As is the case with the history of censorship around the Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin, who is driven out of her country, literary works often *invite* censorship through provocation. However both censorship and the emancipatory critique of censorship often have little to do with the literary aspects of the work. To support Taslima is not to applaud her literary merit, which would arguably fade in comparison to another controversially censored novelist, Salman Rushdie, who continues to face the fatwa for *The Satanic Verses* (1988). The articles on Joyce and Beckett in this issue amply demonstrate not only how literary texts can be driven by a *demand* for censorship but also how they reflexively take it on board and exploit it. It is important to be aware of the cache of censorship and how literature, especially in its agitprop avatar, often makes use of it. From this critical vantage

point of acknowledging the multiple ways in which different kinds of censorship condition writing (not only the literary work but all kinds of writing and even the striated inscription of the social space and the public sphere) we can see the pitfalls in the notion of resistance to censorship via the democratic logic of freedom of expression or the ethic of tolerance. A real critique of censorship must accommodate the point about its imbrication within the logics of our worlds that produce the social as well as the aesthetic inscriptions. This issue with its diverse contributions seeks to find such alternative modes of dealing with censorship.

Supurna Dasgupta's piece "The Nation and its Discontents: Depicting Dissent during the Emergency" studies the forms of protest during the historical period of Emergency in the India of the 1970s and reflects on the archival modes of censorship and resistance. Reading O V Vijayan's doodles among other things, Dasgupta comments on the textual strategies of dissent with an important emphasis on the grammars of the specific medium in question. The piece is especially interesting in drawing a positive connection between self-censorship and protest. Ashmita Mukherjee's essay "Subjectivity and the 'Shocking': Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and Ethical Limits of Pleasure" reflects on the strategies of shock as a response to institutional surveillance from the perspective of a Foucauldian self in performance. She reads Pater's *Marius Epicurean* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to ethically open up the question of pleasure. The article foregrounds the aesthetic question in relation to censorship. Jeremy Fisher's article "Gazing into the Mirror: Censorship and Self-censorship in Early Gay Australian novels" is a significant historical study of Early Gay Australian novels and brings in his own voice as a practising Gay novelist. Apart from a survey of relatively obscure texts in the popular novelistic tradition, the article is particularly valuable for representing the question of sexual sub-culture *qua* censorship and self-censorship. Sanaz Fotouhi's piece "Commodification of Censorship in Iranian Writing in English" takes up our theme from a different position as she highlights in her survey of Iranian writings in English,

the cultural cache of censorship. She shows how this material commoditizes censorship to create an illusion of agency and emancipation. Her piece speaks to the concern expressed in the second part of this introduction about the insufficiency of democratic ethic when it comes to combatting censorship.

Dipanjan Maitra's "'...like an egg without salt': On Joyce's Scandal Works" argues that Joyce uses "scandal work" in his fictional writing to invite the reader to a confrontation with his or her "unmentionable" other, the refuse, the detritus of everyday life. Taking Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire that the modern poet and the rag picker deal in the refuse of society, and Lacan's use of litter and refuse in his psychoanalytic writings, Maitra contends, through a detailed textual criticism of Joyce, that such use is a Joycean strategy to both acknowledge the embarrassing details of his personal failures and to implicate the reader into a trap of encountering the private moments of crisis. Suvendu Ghatak's contribution "Is Critique 'Universal'?" Swift's *Drapier's Letters* and the Possibility of Universal Public Reason" returns us to Foucault's ideas on truth-telling as it reads Jonathan Swift's *Drapier's Letters* to complicate the historical understanding of public discourse in relation to norm, truth and freedom of expression. Via Kant, the article also raises an important question regarding the status of the universal in conceptualizing this public discourse in the 18th century.

Madhurima Das's article "Mum's the Word: Heteronormative Indian Society and the Censorship of Single Unwed Mothers" attempts to situate two landmark decisions by the Supreme Court: that the single unwed mothers can legally be employed and earn money and that homosexuality is a criminal act. The author tries to understand the heteronormative and class-oriented censored aspects embedded within the paradox of these decisions that also question the country's "progressive" thinking. Das asks for a gender equality which protects the vulnerable section of society with substantial financial and societal help. Martin

Schauss's "The Censor's "filthy synecdoche": Samuel Beckett and Censorship" tackles the internalisation of censorship as a literary theme in the works of Beckett as it examines textual instances which bring out the paradoxical untenability of censorship. The article shares with Maitra, the emphasis on excrement among other things and demonstrates the complex structures of nation-state, morality, institution and so on in relation to the question of censorship, while raising subtle questions about gender in the process. Binayak Bhattacharya's "'Not in Our Good": Nationalist and other Concerns in the Censorship Debates in Early Indian Cinema' studies the politics of censorship in early Indian cinema. Locating the cultural-industrial issues for American and British films and the contradictions between nationalist-sacrificial and commercial concerns of the Indian film producers, Bhattacharya shows us how an unofficial but steady cultural regulation in absence of state censorship has developed over time promoting a notion of public "good taste" and publicizing the sensational-cultural aspect of cinema.

We hope the issue will be useful for further discussions and research on literary, philosophical, social, historical and cultural-economic aspects of censorship.

Notes:

¹ See this link, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/censorship>

² *The Constitution of India*, Part I-XXII, page 9. See this link, <http://india.gov.in/my-government/constitution-india/constitution-india-full-text>

³ See *The Hindu*, August 20, 2013. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/rationalist-dabholkar-shot-dead/article5041138.ece>

⁴ See *The Indian Express*, March 11, 2015.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/who-killed-govind-pansare/>

⁵ See *Hindustan Times*, August 30, 2015. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/karnataka-rationalist-and-scholar-mm-kalburgi-shot-dead/story-8BZu0V6YbzU7rHFCIGzPmK.html>

⁶ See for example, DD Kosambi; Wendy Doniger; also for an understanding of the Hindutva interpretation of history, see Sumit Sarkar.

⁷ See *DNA India*, October 9, 2015. <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-police-allegedly-strip-dalit-family-naked-in-up-for-filing-complaint-2133171>; also, *Daily Mail*, October 20, 2015. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-3281581/Caste-fire-engulfs-house-Faridabad-killing-two-Dalit-children.html>

⁸ The most recent being the lynching and killing of Mahammad Saifi and his sons for consuming beef and keeping beef in the fridge. This has sparked further debates on eating habits and practices in India. See *The Hindu*, October 1, 2015 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/fragile-calm-in-dadri-after-man-was-lynched-for-eating-beef/article7707129.ece?ref=relatedNews>

⁹ See *The Indian Express*, January 15, 2015. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/forced-to-withdraw-novel-tamil-author-announces-his-death/>

¹⁰ *The Guardian*, February 13, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/13/indian-conservatives-penguin-hindus-book>;

¹¹ *The Guardian*, August 7, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/07/machete-gang-kills-secular-bangladeshi-blogger-niloy-chakrabarti>

¹² See this, *The Hindu*, November 9, 2015. <http://www.thehindu.com/specials/civil-society/express-their-concern-over-rising-intolerance/article7844951.ece>; also, *The Telegraph*, October 29, 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/11963542/Top-Indian-artists-and-scientists-return-awards-in-protest-at-alleged-climate-of-intolerance-under-Narendra-Modi.html>

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