



Editorial

Guest Editor

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Humankind, in its civilizational journey, had encountered a number of unprecedented odds but never failed to march forward. It definitely gives the humanity a reason to celebrate. However, the present time has aroused a sincere concern about the very position of humanity at the centre. It has become a matter of academic interest in the intellectual ambit of literary and cultural studies. If the path of human progress has been so glorious, why does humanity appear to be at stalemate, portending as though the culture itself is cracking down underneath the shimmering façade of its much-acclaimed development. The present issue of *New Literaria* is an attempt to look into this critical question through an extensive exploration of knowledge produced by literary and cultural studies. The present issue engages with the all-pervading narratives of human history, mythology, literature and culture across regional and national boundaries and addresses the recurring theme of crises as sensed by humankind, both at local and global levels, in multiple forms. In fact, the present edition may be called a special issue that attempts to investigate the idea of overwhelming sense of ‘crises’ with an intellectual thrust.

This special issue is actually an outcome of *New Literaria* initiative that was first conceived as a proposal to organize the 4th International Conference on “Exploring Crisis in Literary and Cultural Studies” in collaboration with the Department of English, Central University of Rajasthan. The genesis of deliberations was present in the *New Literaria* and CURAJ joint effort, which later received an overwhelming response from the larger academic community. The same venture now culminates in the form of the present special issue, wherein the prolific contributors exhibit a profound understanding of literary and cultural crises and an enquiry into what is actually wrong with the whole idea of ‘Anthropocene’. The papers anthologized therein, also accentuate why literary and cultural studies need to critically engage not only with the age-old established notions, but also with the misguided human conceptions, stark realities lying underneath, and subtle insinuations manifested in literary and cultural discourse. While digging deep in the moments of crises as reflected in the expansive realm of literary and cultural studies, the authors in their extensive research overture, navigate a vast spectrum of textuality and engage with the underlying theoretical and critical paradigms. These

papers, on the one hand, analyse the politically motivated yet sensitive historical and cultural phenomena like 'partition' and 'diaspora', whereas, on the other hand, they reveal the nuances of 'human-nature dialogue' and the crucial role played by socio-political-historic factors in creating the critical moments of peculiar cultural conditions.

Moreover, this issue brings out distinctive dimensions of the cultural crises prevalent at multiple levels in multiple domains, through a wider engagement including different literary genres and forms. Scholarly papers undertake a deep critical analysis, circumnavigating across the variety of literary genres ranging from poetry, theatre, fiction to the family histories and mythology. These papers, while pervading the select texts, address critical moments of the humanity as experienced across geographical and cultural boundaries. They engage with the sense of instability and lived uncertainties and look into the implications of these critical experiences in terms of the self, society, individual and collective identities, cultural constructions, history, politics, and even ecology wherein all disciplinary demarcations seem to disappear. Hence, this special edition presents an all-inclusive picture of the contemporary grappling with the various moments of crises as postulated in the wide range of literary and cultural studies.

Besides, this edition foregrounds a question, how come the progressive humanities, set off with the exuberance of renaissance spirit and rationality of enlightenment has reached to such a point of disaster. Why do we have so much apprehension marked with critical moments of human follies and failures. Today, humanity seems to grapple with the anxiety, social fragmentation, political uncertainties and cultural collapse. We do lament over the defacing of beautiful Earth. Amidst such disappointment, could the literary and cultural texts help us to comprehend the cause and curation, remedy and reform, while acknowledging the core of crisis. Perhaps, a sense of loss compels us to look beyond the human centrality and embrace what is 'more' as well as 'other' than human. In fact, in the present state of technology mediated society, this is where the literary and cultural studies need to intervene and respond to the critical moments of crises since they have the potential to suggest constructive philosophies for reinterpreting our surroundings and charge the host of human actions with due responsibilities.

The present issue emphasizes why we need to re-orient the whole conception of human development and equitable society by intermediating knowledge with sensitivity, politics with ethics and ideology with true human philosophy to pave the correct path. Exploration of crises in literary and cultural studies, is an attempt to reinforce the basic human values, somewhere lost in the shortsighted vision of a narcissistic 'Anthropocene' world defined by power and dominance, and probably mis/guided by unethical approach and exploitative practices. Literary and cultural studies need to partake in deciding the future course for humanity not to 'win over' but to 'co-exist' in the wider cultural and ecological networks with mutual respect and

environmental justice. A future world irresistibly shaped by overpowering technology and ideological clash, requires a strong sense of ethics and core human values to avoid further intensifying darker moments of crises. This is what the present special issue of *New Literaria* is devoted to. And, I am thankful to the entire *New Literaria* editorial board for allowing me to be a part of such commitment.