

EDITORIAL

IN 1908 INDIAN REVOLUTIONARY TARAKNATH DAS asked for Leo Tolstoy's support in the struggle against British colonialism. Tolstoy's reply, published in the newspaper *Free Hindustan*, encouraged Indian people not to "participate in evil—in the violent deeds of the administration of the law courts, the collection of taxes and, what is more important, of the soldiers." This letter, along with his book *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894), inspired Mohandas Gandhi's views on *ahimsa* or non-violent resistance, and Gandhi even reprinted Tolstoy's letter in his South African newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, in 1909. In his introduction, Gandhi described India as "the nursery of the great faiths of the world," but he warned that the country "will cease to be nationalist" if it "goes through the process of civilization in the shape of reproduction on that sacred soil of gun factories and the hateful industrialism which has reduced the people of Europe to a state of slavery." Like Tolstoy, he also urged readers "to pause and consider whether, in our impatience of English rule, we do not want to replace one evil by another." His argument was thus based on the idea of India as a society steeped in religious tradition, which would help it to reject the corrupting influences of industrialization, modernization, and militarization.

While religion is still central to the lives of many people in India, none of these influences have been rejected. In fact, India now has the world's fastest-growing economy and largest volunteer military, and it was (until last year) the largest importer of arms. Industrialization, modernization, and militarization have brought tremendous prosperity to some, yet there are still significant social problems (such as poverty, malnourishment, and illiteracy) as well as problems with basic infrastructure (such as transportation, sanitation, and housing), and Indian society remains divided by a centuries-old caste system. Some of these problems were exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, as migrant workers became stranded, and economic growth declined. More than 30 million Indians have also chosen to live and work in other countries, like the UK, where they are among the highest-

earning ethnic groups. As Arundhati Roy wrote in her book *My Seditious Heart* (2019), “India lives in several centuries at the same time,” as “some-how we manage to progress and regress simultaneously.”

Our summer issue features a special section devoted to India and Indian writing, and it begins with Priya Sarukkai Chabria’s poem “Ambapali Wanders Through Her Grove One Last Time As If For the First Time,” which was inspired by a meeting between a royal courtesan and the Buddha, and Mrinalini Harchandrai’s poem “Her Voice as a Thangka Painting,” which refers to an ancient artistic practice that originated in Tibet and can still be found in the Buddhist communities of India. Kunal Basu’s story “Men by the Lake” and Manoj Rupda’s story “Tower of Silence” describe how spiritual values and traditional beliefs continue to impact the lives of people in modern-day India. Sampurna Chattarji’s poem “Another Dimension” and Bibhu Padhi’s poem “Tribal Voices” also focus on spiritual values and the desire to maintain a connection with ancestors, while Shobhana Kumar’s poem “Equations” and Arun Gaur’s poem “Gandhi of Zodin Square” emphasize the chaotic and hectic nature of contemporary Indian cities. Dion D’Souza’s story “Fishie” addresses the problems of economic precarity and changing social attitudes from the perspectives of characters from different generations. Anjum Hasan’s poem “Just Rain” describes how this natural phenomenon conveys a sense of historical continuity, and Eugene Datta’s poem “Anjar, 2001” describes the devastation caused by the Gujarat earthquake, which resulted in the deaths of over two thousand people in this town alone. Anu Kumar’s story “Going Home in the Pandemic” reveals how this crisis was experienced differently by people from different social classes, and Amita Basu’s story “Night” examines the social impact of rigid class hierarchies and gender roles. This section concludes with Anjali Joseph’s excerpt “The Rushcutters,” which focuses on Indians living and working in the UK, and Zac O’Yeah’s non-fiction essay “Looking for Malgudi,” which recounts his search for the historical locations that inspired R. K. Narayan’s fictional depictions of Indian society.

Our summer issue also features Stephen Low’s review of new productions of William Shakespeare’s *King Lear* (1606) and Erin Shields’ prequel *Queen Goneril* (2022) as well as Chris Elson’s review of recent musical performances in Halifax and around the country.