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From the Editors' Desk

The 4th volume of *Srotaswini* consists of papers centred on the theme, **Women in the Multicultural Space**. The term multiculturalism inevitably involves a plurality of disciplines, themes and approaches. Edward Said and Henry Louis Gates opined that the concept of multiculturalism is not restricted to ethnic groups only but it has the quality of multiplying and continually mutating in varied groups. As cultures and communities navigate and negotiate in the globalized world, the space where both confrontations occur and compromises are worked out assumes significance. In this volume we have selected the aforementioned theme because women are an integral part of the multicultural space—in relation to all cultural positions—race, ethnicity, nation, gender, sexuality, class, religion etc. In an ideal 'multicultural' society there is freedom of religion, food, dress, custom etc which can be expressed without any trepidation or persecution. The practice of repressive cultures, whether it is directed against women or any other group viewed as being lesser, marginal, different, deviant or dangerous, must always remain central to any debate on the subject of multiculturalism. Keeping in view the relevance of the broad subject at the present time, a number of sub-themes have also been selected to facilitate interdisciplinary approach and observation from varied vantage points.

Academicians, professionals and research scholars have contributed research articles covering most of the sub-themes of the broad theme. **Ms Anindita Neogi Anaam** in her article considers the multicultural to be a pertinent space in shaping values, ideology, process and ideation of women in the contemporary age. In order to explicate her views, she traces the racial, ethnic, political and professional discrimination women face in multicultural spaces. **Dr Girish Baruah** in his article critically analyses how almost all the religions of the world have given very little space to women. He discusses the double standards persisting in religions in which on one hand women are glorified and on the other hand rigorous sanctions are laid down to restrict the space allotted to women in matters of devotion. **Dr Shakuntala Bora** in her article has analysed the women characters in the Ramayana, who with their ascetic powers could contribute towards social welfare and who may serve as role models for the

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women of today to strive together in the same spirit for similar objectives. **Dr Devabrata Sharma** in his article examines the role of women in a historical event during the Ahom rule. It has been argued that the Moamoria Rebellion was led by two ladies Radha-Rukmini who fought with great prowess and zeal. He not only cites the different sources of history to elaborate his argument, but also studies the influence of Radha-Rukmini on contemporary Assamese society. **Dr Papori Bora's** article sheds light on the way in which Sankardeva, the Vaishnavite saint of Assam, portrayed women in his literary creations. She argues that though the Vaishnavite Movement led by Sankardeva liberated the Assamese women to a certain extent, yet he himself was not free from the feudalistic attitude of constructing women for a patriarchal culture. The traditional space reserved for women in Assam included the development of skills required in domestic industry, such as weaving. **Ms Jyotimanjuri Kalita** in her article focuses on weaving during the colonial period, which was pursued as a spare-time activity rather than a professional one. She explores the possibility of these traditional skills being reinvigorated by women with modern entrepreneurial approaches so as to create a path to both economic growth and social empowerment. **Dr Jyotirekha Hazarika** in her article has analysed the autobiography of journalist Sabita Goswami *Mon Gangar Tirot* which was serially published in the Assamese weekly *Basundhara*. The writer has interpreted Goswami's autobiography as a splendid documentation of social and political scenario of Assam from 1962 to 2005. **Mr Panchanan Hazarika** presents the role of women journalists during the Assam Movement (1979-85) in his article and to elaborate his contention, he considers two prominent women journalists, Nirupoma Borgohain and Sabita Goswami and their portrayal of the conducive and obstructive aspects of the movement in an objective and impartial way. **Ms Ayousree Dowara** and **Dr Karabi Konch** in their joint article have dealt with the issue of women and leadership while drawing attention to women in the police force in Assam that plays a key role in curbing crimes against women. However in their findings they state that women police officers of Assam, in spite of being capable enough to carry out all manner of law enforcement operations, are kept at a distance from the core police functions and are confined to handling only women-related cases. **Mr Jogesh Changmai** in his article has unravelled the position of women in the higher educational scenario of Assam. Through a fact based study of women's enrolment in Dibrugarh University, Mr Changmai reveals the recent trends in the participation of women in Higher Education in Assam, while highlighting the prevalence of gender disparity in various forms despite increase in the enrolment of women in the universities. The joint article by **Ms Banajyotsna Baruah** and **Ms Lopamudra Baruah** looks at the ways in which women in various countries and cultures across the world may be instrumental in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals envisaged by the United Nations Organization. **Ms Nazma Yasin** in her article analyses the life and writings of Sudha Murthy, Chairperson of Infosys Foundation. She shows how Murthy in most of her literary works has explored the cultural understanding of what it

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means to be a woman. Murthy has not only contributed in shaping Infosys as an organisation of building and transferring digital skills, but also transformed it into an agency of serving the less privileged people. **Ms Madhuchanda Kaushik** in her article has discussed on the women entrepreneurs of the North east region who have initiated various entrepreneurial activities using the abundant natural resources of the region. **Ms Pranjuri Goswami's** article deals with the persistence of myths, misconceptions and consequent stigmatization of women regarding menstruation through age old cultural practices. She highlights the spatial implications of such ingrained notions of pollution and purification for women and suggests certain strategies to combat these misconceptions. **Dr Manash Pratim Goswami's** article reflects on the tattoo culture among the tribal communities of India with specific reference to women of the Baiga tribe of Central India. This article depicts how body decoration among these women is intimately associated with their social, economic, spiritual and cultural lives. The writer argues that the tattoo culture among the Baiga women provides them with a social sense of conformity and uniqueness. **Dr Manorama Sharma's** article argues that literary works generally reflect the dominant value systems of the society and the representations of gender relations in literature affect these value systems in various ways. The stereotyping of women in the society is also reflected in literature and this becomes an interesting study of gender and hegemony. She takes up this issue with specific reference to the 'Asomiya' woman. Noted writer **Mitra Phukan** in her article discusses women writers who deal with women-identified themes. She explicates her views from gynocritical perspective with close textual analysis of Assamese authors like Nalinibala Devi, Nirupama Borgohain, Indira Goswami, Arupa Patangia Kalita, and herself. She argues that women are not only producers of textual meaning but also creators of excellent individuals and immensely popular role models for society. **Mr Manoj Barpujari**, the noted film critic takes us to a different direction of woman's space in multiculturalism by emphasizing the representation of women in films. Drawing on Laura Mulvey's article on 'gaze' (1975) which speaks about structures of identification and visual pleasure, Barpujari argues that film becomes the tool for the fulfilment of erotic pleasure through fantasy. In films women bodies are fragmented for the male audience by transforming them into objects for voyeuristic gaze. **Ms Shamim Nasrin** in her article analyses the external influences in the socio-cultural spaces of the tribal societies (hills) of Assam in her reading of two short stories by Mousumi Kondoli. She intends to examine Kondoli's perspectives regarding the challenges faced by these societies. **Mr Akashdipta Thakur's** article on Assamese children's literature gives a perspective on studying this genre as a cultural phenomenon which gives new insights to the world of the girl child. In this article he reflects on how the patriarchal society differentiates between the girl child and the boy child, giving preference to the needs of the boy and ignoring the girl. In this connection he also brings forth the treasure trove of Assamese translations of world children literature. **Mr Sukanta Ghosh** in his article has analysed Mirabai, a medieval Indian poet and Kamala

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Das, a modern Indian English poet from feminist perspective. He highlights the view that the status of women has not seen the desired improvement over the years when we compare the writings of these two women writers belonging to two different ages. **Ms Rosemin Akhtara** pays tribute to the social worker Pandita Ramabai in her article and highlights how Ramabai worked tirelessly for the emancipation of women in India. **Ms Sewali Gogoi** presents a psychological analysis of adolescent girl characters by using the Cognitive Developmental Theory of Jean Piaget. She selects three short stories of the eminent writer of Assam, Bhabendranath Saikia to explore how cognitive changes take place in the transition period from childhood to adulthood. The identity crisis, sexual orientation, daydreaming, risk taking etc. are some of new areas of development that show up and these are handled carefully by the noted litterateur. **Ms Anindita Kar's** article offers a layered reading of Jahnvi Barua's *Rebirth* which at once explores the fictional evolution of Kaveri as she moves towards motherhood, as also the author's psychological tribulation in the birthing of the text. She explores the gradual reconstruction of Kaveri's self in the process of giving birth to a baby. **Ms Puja Bora** in her article has enumerated the feminine sensibility in Pratibha Rai's novel *Jagyaxeni* alias Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas in the epic *Mahabharata*. Ms Bora speaks of how Pratibha Rai retells the story of Draupadi which unfolds the repressed self of the character in a patriarchal society. **Ms Reetuparna Dey** in her article explores the relatively uncharted space of You Tube particularly with reference to the way in which it affords new opportunities for expression and assertion of identity to young women today. **Ms Ritushmita Sharma** in her article studies Chimamanda Ngozi Adich'i's *Americanah* from the perspective of African female immigrants and the challenges they face in a new culture. The paper focuses on how the text launches an attack on separatism by speaking of an immigrant woman's longing for a space from which to speak and which could provide her with cultural and racial security. **Dr Bornali Gogoi** explores the psychological space of women characters in the plays of Jyotiprasad Agarwala, a cultural icon of Assam. She has particularly highlighted the construction and delineation of feminine psychology by Jyotiprasad Agarwala. **Ms Raginee Mahanta's** article on Mamang Dai's *Stupid Cupid* explores the fulfilment of women and their desires—often repressed through restrictions on their sanctioned roles in their own tribal societies—when they migrate to Delhi. She also highlights the writer's portrayal of the city as a confluence of different tribes coming together and also a confluence of emotions emerging between different cultures. **Ms Himakhi Phukan** in her article explores the theme of women and entertainment in multicultural space. She analyses how *Kothanodi*, an award winning Assamese film directed by Bhaskar Hazarika, re-imagines Lakshminath Bezbaroa's *Burhi Aair Sadhu* (Grandma's Tales) as a narrative based on four stories projecting women as main characters. Ms Phukan shows the representation of women in the film from various angles questioning the notions about femininity and motherhood. *Rebirth* once again becomes the select text for **Ms Ratnashree Borthakur** who looks at it from a

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different angle. She demonstrates how the social world of a woman is shaped both materially and discursively and how Kaveri frees herself from this world of structural constraints. She treats this novel as the writer's emancipatory project. **Ms Hirumoni Dihingia** presents an analytical study of *Pratham Pratisruti* by Ashapura Devi which uncovers the patriarchal ideology. Ms. Dihingia refers to the authority of conventions and past practices in the society marginalizing women.

This volume contains both invited and blind peer reviewed articles covering a wide spectrum of issues ranging from the role of women in history, politics, religion, education, literature, cinema, the corporate sector and traditional crafts and culture. It has been our endeavour to have this publication included in the UGC Care list of journals. We sincerely thank the peers for their painstaking efforts in reviewing and evaluating the articles submitted for publication. We also thank the contributors for touching upon almost all the issues related to multiculturalism and the space of women. We are greatly honoured to have scholarly articles from noted litterateurs, historian, film critic and philosophers whose contributions have undoubtedly enriched this volume. We take the opportunity to thank the principal of J.B.College, Dr Bimal Barah and the J.B. College Women Cell who guided us throughout the process and also helped us financially. Finally we extend our heartfelt thanks to M/S Multico who gave us space and time as always to bring out the publication.

The writers have followed both MLA and APA formats of the 7th and 8th editions in the articles. The views expressed in the articles published in this volume are exclusively those of the authors and the editors in no way subscribe to or responsible for them.

We would welcome constructive feedback regarding the articles of this volume which will surely boost up the future endeavours of the journal.

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