

Title: Editorial Note

Author(s): Dr. Gaurav Gadgil

Name of the Publication: Transarea Journal

ISSN: 3107-7080 (Online)

Volume Number: I

Issue Number: 2

Month and Year: Autumn Issue (October), 2025

Page Number: i–ii

Publisher: Somaiya Vidyavihar University

Editorial Note

Heritage, identity, and citizenship are historically and politically contested concepts that occupy central positions in contemporary political, cultural, and social debates. The intersections among these concepts influence how communities construct collective self-understandings, how states regulate belonging and identity, and how individuals negotiate their positions within broader narratives. Critically examining these contested categories enhances understanding of the mechanisms by which states regulate inclusion and exclusion in modern politics.

Heritage is often defined as a cultural legacy transmitted across generations. However, it does not represent a neutral record of the past; rather, it encompasses multiple narratives and ongoing contestations. Heritage functions as a cultural process that privileges dominant narratives while actively silencing others. In contemporary Indian historiography, nationalist elites selectively invoke 'glorious' ancient traditions, particularly those of the selected time periods, to construct a national heritage and reinforce an exclusionary vision of a civilisation state. Such narratives frequently marginalise regional, subaltern, and tribal histories (Thapar 2000).

Beyond the challenges posed by selective heritage construction, the concept of 'invented traditions' refers to practices that appear timeless but are, in fact, modern constructs designed to legitimise authority structures (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Markers such as ethnicity, language, religion, gender, and nationality contribute to identity formation, yet these processes are embedded within specific historical, sociological, and political contexts. Power structures, often mediated by the state, shape identity formation, deploying identity as a tool for national unity or, conversely, for disruption. Through control over education, public culture, and, in some regions, media, the state plays a pivotal role in shaping collective identities. When a singular narrative seeks to dominate discourse, resistance emerges against marginalisation, prompting efforts to assert autonomy. This dynamic renders identity negotiation a persistently contested domain.

What adds new dimensions, political and legal, to these ongoing contestations is citizenship. While conventionally it is interpreted in the narrow sense of membership of a sovereign state, it encompasses a broader identification and association with social and cultural realms. Contemporary scholars have argued that citizenship is stratified along legal and socio-cultural lines (Chatterjee 1993). The interaction between the concepts of heritage, identity, and citizenship adds greater complexity. The dynamics of struggle become evident in liminal landscapes where dominant cultural narratives of belonging to a common heritage marginalise indigenous communities, nomadic communities, migrants, and minority groups whose heritage does not fit the official national narrative. It becomes a zone of hybrid identities that combines multifarious elements, thereby widening the meaning of citizenship, identity, and heritage. As

the world moves in the direction of greater technological inroads in interpersonal communication, digital identities are reshaping many of these traditional concepts.

The concepts of heritage, identity, and citizenship are dynamic and contested categories that are in the process of continuous negotiation. They are deeply embedded in historical processes, social structures, and political power. This issue aims to critically discuss some of these themes to foster a better understanding of our increasingly conflicted and interconnected world.

Dr. Gaurav Gadgil

Editor-in-Chief, Transarea Journal and,
Associate Professor, Somaiya School of Civilisation Studies,
Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai-400077
Email: editor.transareajournal@somaiya.edu

References and Readings

- Chatterjee, Partha. 1993. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ramnath, Kalyani. 2021. "Histories of Indian Citizenship in the Age of Decolonisation." *Itinerario* 45 (1): 152–73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0165115321000115>
- Thapar, Romila. 2000. *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Modern History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions in the journal are solely of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, editorial board, publisher, or its affiliated institutions. The authors are solely responsible for the content of their articles and ensuring all necessary permissions for third-party materials (texts, images, etc.) have been obtained.