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Editorial: Academic Freedom and Journal Publication

This issue's Symposium section publishes the address by the Rector of the Central European University, Prof Shalini Randeria, at the conference organized on the scholarly work of Emeritus Prof Neloufer de Mel on her retirement this year. Prof Neloufer de Mel served as a co-editor of the *UCR* 2020 – 2022. The Rector's address focuses on challenges to academic freedom in the European context. We think therefore it is appropriate to add our reflections on academic freedom from our own context, as it relates to journal management and publication.

The concept of academic freedom emerged with the idea of modern universities. If universities are to engage in the pursuit of truths, it follows that academic freedom must be preserved for the university community. Academic freedom is broadly understood as the freedom to engage in research in your stated areas of specialization, and to teach and engage publicly based on such expertise. Academic freedom coexists with academic accountability. Typically, universities have arrangements that seek to ensure both academic freedom as well as academic accountability. It is on this basis that universities are vested with institutional autonomy.

In journal publication, academic freedom is protected through institutional arrangements as well as through processes. In the case of *UCR*, the Editorial Team and the Editorial Board function independently and based on their expertise. The Editorial Team reports to the Editorial Board and the Board reports to the Research and Development Committee of the University. In terms of process, anonymised peer review and content-editing too operates on the basis of academic freedom. The responsibilities of the editor and assistant editor are to ensure that the freedom of all parties concerned to hold a reasoned view is respected and that publication ethics are adhered to. Accountability of reviewers is ensured through the peer review report. The accountability of content editors is ensured through the reasons they provide and their engagement with the authors in content-editing. To ensure that submissions meet publication standards, submissions are often submitted for re-review. At the content-editing stage too submissions almost always go through three cycles of editing. Through this entire process, editors carry the overall responsibility to ensure that publication ethics, academic integrity and freedom are respected. At present, the Editorial Board is developing a mechanism to deal with any complaints or issues that could arise in the publication process.

These efforts require significant time and resources and have been made possible because the University of Colombo funds the *UCR*. This funding has also allowed *UCR* to publish open access, thereby providing universal access to the *UCR*.

Issue 2 of Volume 5

Issue 2 of Volume 5 of the *UCR* covers a diverse range of disciplines and includes two book reviews as well. ‘Politics in the Robe: Reverend Batuwangala Rahula’s expedient use of allegory and symbolism’ by Madhubhashini Ratnayaka provides a critique of the way in which Rev Rahula Thero’s Sinhala fiction engages with dominant political discourse during, as well as after, the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. ‘Evaluating the Attitudes and Trust of Sri Lankan Air Traffic Controllers towards Accepting Automation in terms of Electronic Flight Strips’ by Anupama Sudehani speaks to the fields of engineering and psychology by examining attitudes of air traffic controllers with regard to the impact that automation may have on their work. The article highlights the importance of trust when automation is brought in as a step in labour management.

This issue carries four articles that are research reviews. ‘Dance as a mode of intervention in indigenizing the social work in Sri Lanka: A systematic review’ by Varuni Fernando offers an analysis of the knowledge available on local dance forms in relation to social work. The author reviews the scarce literature on this topic in Sri Lanka and other work outside Sri Lanka to focus on the viability of dance as a therapeutic form. In ‘The Construction of the Sri Lankan Northern Tamil Woman: the shaping of identities across three decades,’ Shruthi de Visser uses fictional and non-fictional genres as well as reports to offer an assessment of the different ways in which the Northern Tamil Woman is depicted. Through this article, the author illustrates how different eras and their contexts have impacted women’s identities. In ‘Ethical problems and ethical decision-making models in nursing practice: A scoping review,’ D.K.M. de Silva, K.A.D.S. Kaushalya, and T.A. Asurakkody present an analysis of the literature surrounding both ethical issues in nursing and models that can be applied to solve these ethical problems. Through the scoping review, they address the need for updated models. ‘Genetic Predisposition to Breast Cancer: Understanding the Role of Susceptible Genes and the Impact of Hereditary Mutation’ by Thilina Gunathilaka reviews the work on ten commonly known breast cancer susceptibility genes. The author demonstrates that more research is needed for targeted prevention and treatment.

The two book reviews are on newly published research on Sri Lanka. Bart Klem’s book *Performing Sovereign Aspirations: Tamil insurgency and post-war transition in Sri Lanka* published by Cambridge University Press has been reviewed by Rajesh Venugopal. Gayan Abayaratna has reviewed the *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Sri Lanka*, edited by Kanchana Ruwanpura and Amjad Mohamed-

Saleem. Both books have been published in 2024 and *UCR* is happy to present these reviews on freshly produced research on Sri Lanka.

This issue comes out as we end 2024 and look ahead to 2025. The *UCR* has made significant strides this year in terms of improving the quality of its publications and improving its internal processes. These developments were possible due to teamwork, institutional support and the cooperation of our reviewers and authors.

We wish the *UCR* readership the very best for the coming year. May we advance truth and justice in our individual and collective living.

Dinesha Samararatne
Editor
05 December 2024

Kaushalya Perera
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