

## The Times They are A-Changin'...

"Come gather 'round people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown  
And accept it that soon  
You'll be drenched to the bone.  
If your time to you  
Is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin'  
Or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin'....."

These were the famous starting lines of the song written by the 1960s' anti-establishment American pop-singer icon Bob Dylan, where he warned us of the changing times, morals, mores, norms, and values, and asked us to be prepared lest we simply "sink like a stone" through the rising waters. The album carrying this song was released in 1964. And now, 50 years down the line, it still rings as true as it did then. Change is life, stagnation is death. Individuals, families and societies, all move through change, from homeostasis to allostasis. Whether, we like it or not, this is the fact.

Is change welcome? Yes and no. Change is welcome when both these simple criteria are met: (a) We want it, and (b) we can cope with it. Change is certainly not welcome when neither of the two is met. A more complex situation arises when only one of the two criteria is met. Change is welcome but burdensome when we want it but cannot cope with it, and change is insipid to unwelcome when we do not want it but simply and passively cope with it. This issue of your journal provides instances of almost all of these!

### Shifting Home

First, the journal itself. As you are aware, the Indian Journal of Social Psychiatry (IndJSP), the flagship journal of the Indian Association for Social Psychiatry,

had commenced its journey 31 years ago, in 1984. This year onward, it will be published by the Wolters-Kluwers/MedKnow Publications, an internationally acclaimed publishing house that handles and publishes more than 300 scientific journals from India and abroad. With their vast experience and expertise at each step of manuscript handling, production, publication, and distribution, IndJSP is poised for a vast change in the welcome direction. The initial burden of change is quite substantive though. It requires a "lock, stock, and barrel" adjustment to each and every stage of production, starting from the online manuscript management system (yes, all new submissions will be dealt with online-only system at <http://www.journalonweb.com/ijsp/> at every stage of processing). A new journal website has been created ([www.indjasp.org](http://www.indjasp.org)) where you can find published articles online for free viewing and free download (yes, free for all – at least till we can cope with the expenses!). The print version of the journal as you can see bears a completely new look starting from the cover design (which depicts elements of social psychiatry in an Indian context) to the new format and accessibility of the articles. And with their huge network and expertise, IndJSP should be reaching a hitherto unforeseen large number of people through libraries, institutions, and individuals. We will strive to maintain a high quality of the journal and meeting with strict deadlines and other technical parameters, eventually aiming for inclusion in the PubMed.

From this issue onward, we wish to carry a "theme" for each issue – either based on some original research articles on important and topical themes of our times, or based on reviews, perspectives, opinion pieces, and debates. The idea is to stimulate interest in areas germane to social psychiatry. This issue's theme is "migration and mental distress/illness" (see later). The next issue will be on Mental Health Care Bill and its implications for social psychiatry. The third issue will be on the theme of caregivers and caregiving. The fourth will be on a similarly topical theme in social psychiatry. These individual issues will be edited by the executive editor, associate editors, and assistant editors working in a collaborative team.

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All these require a tremendous input in terms of the four big “M”s: Manpower, management, money, and most importantly, motivation. But because we all – and you all – want this change, this is welcome, even if somewhat burdensome to begin with. With your best wishes (and your best submissions!), we believe we can do it.

## Voices of Change

The second important change is evident from the tone and tenor of the articles published in this issue. Most of the articles talk of change – in our society and in our mindset – and how to cope with it. Not all the changes alluded to in these articles, however, are always welcome.

The presidential address talks of advocacy for the mentally ill – in terms of “offering a voice to the voiceless.”<sup>[1]</sup> This calls for a major change in our mindset and in our ways of working, even in our perceived roles as mental health professionals. The N. N. De Oration, on the other hand, talks about an unwelcome change in our modern society – rape and various sexual assaults.<sup>[2]</sup> Although prevalent in almost all societies since early years of civilization, these assaults have been increasingly becoming common in our so-called modern and civilized societies. Despite legal provisions being strengthened and mental health issues being addressed, we are still a far away from reaching anything remotely satisfactory, and the important oration is a sober reminder of the current “nonchanging” situation as well as a clarion call for change in the welcome direction.

The award papers published in this issue also talk change! The G. C. Boral I paper explores medical students’ coping and quality of life in the face of a new, challenging lifestyle – a change they perhaps wanted but often not prepared for to cope with.<sup>[3]</sup> The second G. C. Boral award paper documented a high prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder and other psychiatric morbidity in survivors of the 2013 Uttarakhand natural calamity, an unfortunate sequel of an unprecedented and unwelcome change of enormous proportions.<sup>[4]</sup> While the B. B. Sethi Award I paper dealt with risk assessment by mental health professionals from diverse backgrounds and dealing with different kinds of mental problems,<sup>[5]</sup> the B. B. Sethi Award II paper addressed the current societal change in the tremendous increase in the use of the internet (overall a welcome change of course, but with its “good, bad, and ugly” sides – the latter being the controversial issue of “internet addiction”).<sup>[6]</sup>

## Theme of This Issue: Migration and Mental Distress/Illness

Continuing on the theme of change, migration is known to cause an unprecedented change in the lifestyle, goals and coping among individuals and families.<sup>[7]</sup> This theme is one that is central to social psychiatry, as it depicts the

conflicts between man’s hopes and aspirations for a better prospect in a new socioeconomic-cultural matrix (the “pull” factor), pressures and obligations forcing a person to migrate to a socioculturally alien land, be it outside the country or inside (the “push” factor), and the resilience of human beings and their families in the face of new challenges of change. In fact, this was the theme of the National Conference of the Indian Association for Social Psychiatry in 2012, and a lead editorial of that year’s IndJSP focused on this theme, especially on internal migration.<sup>[8]</sup>

Three articles in this issue deal with migration and mental distress, illness or coping. In a large, four-city survey of factory workers migrating from rural areas to urban industrialized settings, Agrawal *et al.* found a sizeable proportion of the migrants reporting psychological distress, which somewhat decreased after successful re-settlement.<sup>[9]</sup> Both “push factors” as well as not being able to cope to the new environment immediately after migration were seen to be correlated with their psychological distress. Although this issue was studied earlier in India in the 1970s,<sup>[10,11]</sup> the mere fact that this still is a major issue needs to be documented and highlighted.

The second study in the migration series examined the pattern of psychiatric morbidity in migrant patients attending a psychiatric outpatient clinic in an industrial city of Punjab.<sup>[12]</sup> Although the sample size was small and psychiatric morbidity was not compared with nonmigrant patients, the interesting fact brought out in this study was a much higher proportion of affective disorders (depression in females and mania in males) in the second-generation migrants compared with the first-generation migrants. This apparently counter-intuitive finding needs replication, but this has been observed elsewhere, e.g., in the study of the black Caribbean immigrants in the USA.<sup>[13]</sup> Interestingly, the medical students study earlier mentioned too found that immigrant medical students had different coping mechanisms than local students in that the immigrant students were more fatalistic, but at the same time engaging more in problem-focused coping (a better form of coping than emotion-focused coping).<sup>[3]</sup> Thus, not all change is bad!

All in all, the bunch of articles in this issue of IndJSP in its newly changed avatar demonstrates change. The times they are a-changin’...

We hope that we all – the editors, the reviewers, the authors, the readership, mental health professionals of all walks, our families, our society, and social psychiatry at large – admit that the “waters around us have grown”, and that we are getting “drenched to the bone”, but that we “better start swimming” rather than “sink like a stone”!

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*On behalf of the entire Editorial Team of IndJSP*

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### Conflicts of interest

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