

**25th Annual Conference of
Indian Political Economy Association
6-7th Jan 2022, School of Economics,
University of Hyderabad**

Twenty-fifth Annual Conference of Indian Political Economy Association Conference will be held at School of Economics, University of Hyderabad, during 6-7th Jan 2022. The Conference will deliberate on the five themes, given as follows:

1. Changing Ecology of Global and Indian Capitalism: Labour, Accumulation and Finance
2. Corporatization of Agriculture and Farmers' Protest
3. National Education Policy-2020: Higher Education
4. COVID and the Deepening Gender Divide
5. The Covid-19 pandemic and India's Public Health

Papers written originally for the conference, based on Political Economy analysis of theory and evidence are invited. An abstract should be sent by 15th Dec 2021 and a final paper by 30th Dec 2021. The accepted abstracts and will be intimated by 21st Dec 2021, organisers reserve the right to admit abstract/papers. Abstracts and papers should be sent to rvramanaipea@gmail.com.

Concept note

1. Changing Ecology of Global and Indian Capitalism: Dimensions of Labour, Accumulation and Finance

Capital accumulation is an essential characteristic of capitalism. Under capitalism, accumulated money-capital is continually reinvested in expanding means of production. Accumulation of capital done by capitalist firm involves generation, realisation and reinvestment of surplus value. Purchase of labour power is an essential feature of the accumulation process under capitalism. The difference between the value added by the use of labour power and the value of labour power is the source of surplus value in capitalism. In other words, surplus value is nothing but unpaid time of workers.

The early form of capitalism is referred to as free market capitalism or laissez capitalism. Over time and space, capitalism has taken diverse historical forms: Monopoly capitalism, neoliberal capitalism, global capitalism, finance-dominated capitalism. Monopoly capital refers to new form capital, embodied in the modern giant corporation, that displaced the small owner-controlled firm as the dominant unit of the system. Neoliberalism is a political ideological project that seeks to bring the state under the supervision of the market. Global capitalism is capitalism that transcends national borders. It is characterised by integration of every country into a new globalised system of production and finance. Financialisation entails increasing role of financial motives and institutions in the working of the economy. The global accumulation regime that thrived and survived on all these have exhausted the means to post-postpone the crisis of overaccumulation and realisation. The rise of multipolar world is a sign of decline of United States of America as the centre of global accumulation, seemed to have been leading to a new Cold War between US and China. Torn under its own stress of realization

crisis at home and financialization strategy exhausting its capacity, global capitalism is crying for stimulation on a global scale. The global warming and Covid crisis have further stained the accumulation process. What is the way forward for the global capitalism to get out of the Great Recession? How far India can go with financialization and neoliberalism, the failed paths for growth and recovery and solve its developmental challenges? This conference invites papers from political economy analysis of global and Indian capitalism from labourist, growth and financialization strategy.

2. Corporatization of Agriculture and Farmers' Protest

Throughout the world agrarian issues are being raised and debated due to crisis. Agrarian crisis is prevailing in many countries and some developed countries are making the agriculture to survive by providing huge subsidy and by using migratory labour. In many countries big corporates are purchasing land at a very large scale. The agricultural value chains have been strongly controlled or being controlled by the corporate. In the developing countries these corporates are trying to have more and more control over the input as well as output chains in the agricultural production and products. In case of some outputs and inputs, the corporate have very strong hold.

In India the process of corporatization of agriculture sector has been speeded up after the adoption of LPG policies since 1991 and implementation of WTO in 1995. In the light of these policies many changes in the laws, rules and regulations have been carried out in India from time to time. Many scholars, farmers' organisations, agricultural labourers' organisations and different political parties have raised the issues at many occasions and time to time regarding the adverse effects of all these changes.

The Govt of India passed three farm laws in September 2020, namely, i) Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services for Agriculture Act 2020; ii) Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020; and iii) Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020, which were intended to corporatize Indian agriculture. Farmers from Punjab and Haryana and later from UP have protested this unprecedented move to legalize non-MSP purchases, removal of appellate clauses for farmers in contract farming, removal of stock piling limits for traders. Central government tried to pave way for corporate retail purchases jettisoning Minimum Support Price payment requirement and making official market yards redundant. The argument that it would replace a corporate middleman to save farmers from small *adtiyar* convinced none and became clear that warehousing and trading are being given to giant monopoly houses. 31 Kisan organizations formed joint action committee, in coordination with All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), joined by lakhs of farmers from almost 20 states. From 5th July 2020 to this day, farmers have managed to conduct an uninterrupted strike for more than one year, one of the historic and longest strikes ever happened in the India. Rallying with thousands of tractors, joined by millions of farmers dug their heels at the four main entries to the city of Delhi. Government tried every means ranging from lathi charge, cold water jets in chilli winter, firing, sabotage, running over farmers through goons, unleashing propaganda on farmers describing them as anti-national. Nothing deterred the strong willed farmers to continue their protest, which eventually forced the Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself to announce decision to repeal the three Acts.

What does this prolonged agitation convey? Has the government lost its hegemony by acting unilaterally in favour of corporate interests? What made government to pass these Acts and was willing to test the patience of millions of farmers who were sitting in cold, rain, dust and heat? Is the repealing of the Acts consolatory of already pro-corporate policy? What are the mechanics of the amazing protest by farmers that seemed to have restored democracy in India when all other institutions were systematically captured or destroyed? The Conference invites papers on these questions from wide ranging disciplines of social sciences to analyse the changing political economy of agriculture.

3. National Education Policy-2020: Future of Indian Higher Education

Government of India constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Professor K. Kasturirangan, Former Chairman of ISRO, Bengaluru to prepare Draft National Education Policy and the committee signed the report (484 pages) in December 2018 and submitted the report to the Ministry of Human Resource Development in May 2019. MHRD invited comments of the various stakeholders and prepared a draft (55 pages) for the consideration of the Prime Minister Office in October, 2019. The ministry revised the draft after taking into consideration the comments of PMO and submitted revised draft (71 pages) for the consideration of the union cabinet. This draft with some changes was approved by the union cabinet on July 29, 2020 (66 pages). The National Education Policy-2020 document has been released to the public on July 30, 2020. *Unfortunately, after so many changes, the final document appears to be a political document of the NDA government.*

The NEP-2020 has made comprehensive recommendations to revise and revamp all the aspects of the education system in India: (i) Reorganisation of the institutional structure and its functioning (ii) teaching learning process (iii) academic management (iv) regulation and accreditation to create a new system which is consistent with the aspirational goals of 21st century. The legal framework for operationalisation of NEP is yet to be worked out in the form of Legislative Acts, Statutes, and Regulations for the Higher Education Institutions in the country: Universities and Colleges. The weakest link in the NEP is the lack of financial commitment for successful implementation of the proposed policy and various experts have expressed apprehensions that due to inadequate public funding, the NEP will be highjacked and will open a flood gate for privatisation of education which will become expensive and be out of reach of the various deprived sections of the society in India.

Papers are invited examining the implications of various aspects of proposed policy recommendations on changing the structure and nature of higher education and its implications on te society with reference to the New Education Policy-2020.

4. COVID and Deepening Gender Divide: A Daunting Challenge for Indian Economy

Reference of women headed nations' efficacy in managing COVID pandemic had been a celebrated news of 2020. While the complex nuances of this pattern deserves a deeper analysis, it would be

helpful to note that countries with women nation heads are also known for better gender parity. One can even argue that countries with better gender parity or a relatively more egalitarian society are better prepared to address different types of humanitarian crises. Feminist economists have been emphasizing over the humane aspect of economic behaviour, which is not necessarily shaped by self-centric individualistic traits and aggressive competitiveness but also by an inter-dependable and commonsensical compassion for fellow human. The conventional model of economic development, operating within the framework of neoliberal governance, has largely failed in bridging not only gender gap but also the divides along the lines of class, race and caste. Unlike the countries with better gender parity, COVID crisis has deepened the pre-existing divides within such economies and societies, like in India.

In terms of gender gap, India ranked 112th in 153 countries in 2020. But in 2021, it slipped 28 points and now has been ranked 140th among 156 countries. While the country did impressively well in bridging gender gap on the political participation sub-index until 2021, when it slipped from 18th (in 2020) to 51st position (in 2021), it was marked for its worrisome gap on the parameter of economic participation & opportunities and health & survival. Now India is on 151st position for its gender gap on economic participation & opportunities and 155th position on health & survival. Undoubtedly, this shows a disquieting situation that calls for attention. This session invites papers discussing the political economy of gender & capitalism, factors behind widening gender gap in India, with a special focus on women's low workforce participation, on the gender paradox of India, where distressing gender gap in the field of economic participation and health persists despite country's reasonably good performance on the front of political participation.

5. The Covid-19 pandemic and India's Public Health

The Covid-19 pandemic has produced the most devastating public health emergency of the century. It has exposed the vulnerability not only of the Health Systems the country but even the governance of it as well. While it is time to debate the initiatives taken during the novel coronavirus epidemic in India, we need to use the experience generated during this period as an opportunity of learning, both for the present and the future.

Health sector has been subjected systematic privatization over the last three decades. However, this pandemic has proved that public health facilities have proved their irreplaceable value. Nearly 90 percent of critical Covid-19 cases were treated by public health facilities. The private sector initially went into hibernation, and later came out of it only to mint money by fleecing the patients for tests and treatment. The insurance companies have refused to pay for Covid treatment in most cases. *And we have the lowest public funded health sector in the world and highest Out of Pocket Expenditure in the world!* Millions of people lost their lives due to the Covid attack, thousands died for lack of oxygen and medicines, while several millions are still suffering from the post-Covid morbidities. The pandemic has financially bankrupted victims. There is still no bid public discourse about what kind of health system the country should espouse to deal with future waves of Covid or other pandemics. How much did people ended up paying? As Niti-Ayog proposing, can we afford to privatise the existing district level hospitals? This conference invites papers from primary and secondary data analysis on impact of the pandemic on life, expenditures to critically analyse India's public health system.

