



**JAIN**  
DEEMED-TO-BE UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR  
RESEARCH IN  
SOCIAL SCIENCES  
AND EDUCATION



## **THE SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE**

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## PLENARY SESSION 2

### Impact of Pandemic and Sustainable Governmental Policies



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The COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a door that divides the world before and after significantly, the effects of which we are still experiencing. The changes affected different sectors differently which the second plenary session tried to address. The session reflected the changes of the pandemic at various levels, be it state-centric or through the lens of science and diplomacy, human rights or media. The session was chaired by **Prof. R.S. Deshpande**, *Former Director of Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC)*, who with his experience just yielded his magic by connecting the entire session with different topics into one. The session had four well-known speakers from four different sectors.



*Prof. Deshpande chairing the session*

The first speaker, **Shri T.M. Vijay Bhaskar**, (*IAS Retd*), *Former Chief Secretary for the Government of Karnataka and current chairman of the Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission and Indian Institute of Public Administration (Karnataka Regional Branch)* spoke on 'State of Administrative Reforms in Karnataka Post-Pandemic Challenge' giving a state-centric view regarding the issues they faced during the pandemic focusing on Karnataka. As someone who was directly involved with state affairs serving as the Chief Secretary for the Government of Karnataka during the Covid-19 pandemic, he had first-hand experience and understanding of both the approaches taken and the flaws that the state has experienced. Through his presentation, he has outlined the necessity to empower the local governance sector including different units such as gram panchayats, municipalities and other offices that are involved with public dealings in the rural setting as they would be directly serving the people at the grassroots level.

One of the biggest challenges that the pandemic saw was the issue of migrants, both inter-state and intra-state and the problems that it had associated with it such as proper documentation processes as well as providing them with social security benefits including temporary housing and capacity building for street vendors who were affected due to the lockdown restrictions. The speaker also emphasised the different measures that the state government undertook for the benefit of the citizens such as providing better internet connectivity education as well as business transactions were the first aspects that went digital. Another significant aspect that the government has emphasised was the health sector, both in rural and urban areas with an increase in testing facilities, ICU beds, oxygen cylinders etc. The pandemic saw a rise in two aspects- an increase in the trust in traditional healthcare such as Unani and Ayurveda along with the quantity of services provided online.



*Shri. Vijay Bhaskar (IAS Retd) spoke about the state-centric approach during his session*



*Shri. Vijay Bhaskar emphasised the importance of local governance*

The second speaker, **Prof. M.J. Vinod**, *Department of International Studies, Political Science and History, Christ (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru* focused on the interface between science and diplomacy during the pandemic where he examined the effects of covid19 in terms of diplomacy. He emphasised that despite the huge loss of lives, the pandemic was able to tie different regions through science and diplomacy resulting in multilateralism and collaborative action between nations. Science diplomacy has continued in the post-covid era and has displayed the benefits of transcending through disciplines and boundaries. The speaker has argued for including science in different fields of diplomacy combined with the case of climate change and diplomacy. He has also focused on different styles of science diplomacy that are used by different leaders to fulfil different goals of national policies. Although Prof. Vinod has highlighted the presence of different types of science diplomacies with the emphasis that there is no single type of science diplomacy that can be developed by all nations of the globe, he has also pushed to adopt science which will help boost global knowledge and help in the expansion of the multilateral collaboration between nations citing the comparable increase of people in the science diplomacy jobs in the post COVID era.



*Prof. Vinod during his session*

Prof. Vinod was succeeded by the third speaker, **Dr. Gopal Krishna Siwakoti**, *President of INHURED International, Kathmandu, Nepal* who analysed the pandemic from the lens of human rights. Apart from the huge loss of lives, the pandemic had a terrible impact on human rights, especially on the marginalised sections of society. Dr. Siwakoti, hailing from Nepal has particularly emphasised that people who are vulnerable to natural disasters and other conflicts as these people have minimal social protection and are more prone to harm. Additionally, the shrinking of multiple economies with many countries entering recessions has resulted in the Least Developed Countries (LDC) experiencing the burn in their already poor economies. To counter the problem, Dr. Siwakoti has argued for changing the way funding takes place. He emphasised continuous and consistent funding which is critical for avoiding the negative impact of the pandemic. His session ended with him urging for a sustainable 'new normal' which will help in creating a fit blue planet where everyone can live with dignity.



*Dr. Siwakoti spoke about the state of human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic*



*Dr. Siwakoti with his recent publication, "Borderless Benevolence"*

The last speaker of the session was **Mr Himanshu Shekhar Mishra, Senior Editor, Political and Current Affairs, NDTV India**. He has looked into the lens of reporting during a crisis and spoke about COVID-19, Crisis Communication Challenges and a New Pandemic Law: An Ethical Code for 'Inclusive' Pandemic Reporting. He has compared the COVID-19 pandemic with the days of the Spanish flu of 1918-1919 which was the largest public calamity before COVID-19. He has highlighted the terrible impact of the pandemic with an increase in food insecurity, poverty, unemployment and a decline in national income for most countries halted the progress for SDGs in these countries. Lastly, he has highlighted how the pandemic has resulted in institutional flaws and public health communication in several countries.



*Mr. Himanshu Shekhar Mishra spoke about reporting during crises*

With the four speakers highlighting the impact of the pandemic on four different areas, the audience was compelled to think about these areas and grasp the technical difficulties that each sector faced during the pandemic. The last part of the very enriching second plenary session was the discussion segment where ideas flowed with several questions and comments to the speakers which the speakers were delighted to answer. The session ended with expert comments from the Chair, Prof Deshpande where he accumulated the ideas from all four speakers and summarised them. Finally, the speakers and the chair were felicitated by the organisers of CeRSSE.



*Discussions and Q/A session with the four speakers*