

THE SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE  
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**EDITORS DESK**



George Bernard Shaw once said, “*Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself*”. The Social Science Perspective offers writing space to explore issues at the heart of social sciences and humanities. A kind of retrospective expression of creativity and research in the post pandemic scenario, to tap the hidden potential and drive of the scholars, and others in the academic community, and to gain an appreciation for how the present world continues to evolve and is shaped by us tomorrow. A gamut of ideas is explored in the form of articles, poetry, review, field texts and they communicate their complex arguments in the following sections. Meanwhile, the world is slowly moving back to a new normalcy, wherein we all are learning how to carry on with our daily tasks, within the ongoing pandemic. Vaccination drives have increased momentum and educational institutions are opening up. While many of us as Faculty Members are getting back to physical campus spaces yet our online classrooms continue. The ‘blended mode of learning’ as a reality is here to stay. Within this background, the Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CeRSSE) has carried on with its activities supporting academic capacity building and enriching research.

This newsletter, started this year as a quarterly one, begins with a view of the world explored through the lens of multilateralism that the Biden Administration promises. To examine the pulse of the nation, we brought together youth voices on a webinar to deliberate on the ‘State of the Nation at 74’. The gender column this time carries a tribute to the icon of South Asian feminism, Kamala Bhasin who passed away last month. Our Ph.D Scholars Shukla Bose reports from her ongoing doctoral field work, while Sangeeth presents a poem which he penned. We wrap up this issue with reports of international and national events organised/participated in. We hope you all enjoy reading it.

## THE WORLD VIEW

### **The Biden Administration: What Kind of Multilateralism is in Store?**

The assumption of power by the Biden Presidency has opened out many possibilities for the future of multilateralism. His return to multilateral diplomacy, trade and politics seems to be quite promising. The Trump administration ripped apart all that was carefully nurtured over the years. In his first few days in office Trump withdrew from the Paris climate change agreement, the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Iran Nuclear Deal, and delegitimized the very idea of multilateralism itself. Well known foreign policy expert Richard Haas termed it the “withdrawal doctrine”. In the whole process much damage was inflicted to the credibility to the US leadership.

The debate between multilateralism and isolationism has been an ongoing one especially during the Presidency of Trump. Biden will be hard pressed to restore America’s role in the comity of nations. This includes restoring Washington’s democratic credentials, its moral standing as well as reopening the American economy. This is because the Trump Presidency seems to have left behind a fractured and unstable world order. Many of the global challenges Biden believes needs to be faced together.

However there will be a variety of contestations en route. Hence he cannot take the Europeans for granted. The European Union may have some reservations in challenging Beijing. The EU has negotiated the Comprehensive Investment Act with China. Perhaps it is one of the most ambitious agreements that China has negotiated with a third country. Some would argue that it is a win for a China and a blow for transatlantic relations.

However the overall sense is that the European leaders are keen to engage the United States, after the Trump tsunami. Trump had also withdrawn from the UN Human Rights Council, alleging that the Council was anti-Jewish in its outlook. The Trump administration also argued that the Council consisted of Human rights abusers like China and Venezuela. Biden is likely to rejoin the Human Rights Council. As Biden often says the most effective way of promoting human rights is to reengage with the Council, though in need of reforms. Issues like elections by secret ballot and Israeli bashing have often been controversial. Hence engagement by Biden has been linked to reforms of the Human Rights Council too.

Trump undid many hard years of bargaining and negotiations in the WTO and virtually strangulated it. He also introduced a phase of trade wars. His underlying argument was that the WTO did not serve US interests. Biden has been known to be a critic of Trump’s decision to undermine the Dispute Resolution Panel of the WTO. Trump even refused to appoint judges to the Appellate Body. For almost two year he blocked the appointment of new judges due to complaints over judicial activism at the WTO. Deep down it had to do with issues over the sovereignty of the US. By December 2019 Appellate Body was reduced to just one judge that made it virtually dysfunctional. No trade regime can survive without adjudicating disputes. He even blocked the appointment of a consensus candidate for the WTO’s post of Secretary General. But for Trump Ms. Okonjo-Iweala would have made it to the post. As Nigeria’s former Finance Minister, she had vast experience in the World Bank. The US was totally isolated on this issue. It seems possible that Biden will reset and reverse course. The

ability of the WTO to negotiate rules and to adjudicate trade disputes is critical to global trade. Though the WTO has its share of problems, yet a world order devoid of rules can be quite chaotic.

Biden has repeatedly emphasized the importance of the TPP in taking on the Chinese. He has already rejoined some of the multilateral treaties and agreements that Trump decided to quit. Biden would have to go through a process of hard diplomatic bargaining to re-enter the TPP, as it carries domestic political risks too. The TPP was the center of an arrangement that was the culmination of a series of efforts. China is waiting on the sidelines to see whether the US will miss the bus, as Beijing would perhaps welcome any form of US isolationism. TPP will reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers among its signatories. When former President Obama had signed the instrument in February 2016, it had incorporated investor state dispute settlement procedures, as a safeguard to take on the Republicans in the US Congress. The challenge Biden faces is the overall skepticism towards multilateral trade deals in the US and has promised to “build it back better”. Let us not forget that China celebrated when Washington decided to walk out of the TPP. Biden realizes that any trade deal involves hard bargaining.

In the case of the Paris Climate change agreement all that is required is a month’s notice and the US could be back on board by March 2021. Biden decided to rejoin the World Health Organization on the very first day of assuming office. He has also promised to rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA) i.e., the Iran Nuclear Agreement. Of course this is also contingent on the compliance of Iran. Needless to say, Biden is also keen to negotiate a successor agreement that will, focus on Iran’s missile program.

Trump also withdrew from the Treaty on Open skies, though countries like Britain, France and Germany stayed on. The technical hitch for Biden would be resubmitting these treaties to the Senate in case he decides to re-enter them. Though Biden will reemphasize the importance of multilateralism, yet he will be walking a tight rope in having to simultaneously prioritize US jobs, industries and the search for markets. He may have to draw an eclectic balance between multilateralism and unilateralism. Though the Biden presidency has promised a return to multilateralism, it is bound to be a hard road ahead, but worth the effort. One would need to wait-and-watch on what terms and conditions Biden will return to multilateralism.



***Dr. M.J. Vinod is a Professor in the Department of International Relations, Politics, and History, Christ (deemed-to-be) University, Bangalore***

## **PULSE OF THE NATION**

**Panel Discussion – Conducted by Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CeRSSE), Jain (Deemed-to-be University)**

**August 18, 2021 – 3.00-4.30 p.m.**

### ***'The State of the Nation at 74-Youth Voices'***

To commemorate India's 74<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, a panel discussion was organised by the Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CRSSE) Jain (Deemed-to-be University), to better understand and hear the voices of young, bright minds that will tomorrow run the country, ensuring a better future for the population of this beautiful mother land of ours.

Dr. Priyanka Mathur, Associate Professor at CeRSSE and Webinar Coordinator began by welcoming the 342 members in the audience and highlighted the importance of giving agency, voice and participation to the youth. She then welcomed Honorable Vice Chancellor of Jain (Deemed-to-be University) to give the introductory remarks. Dr. Raj Singh proceeded with a very inspiring keynote that emphasised on the role of youth in the future of the country as well as the importance of a positive outlook on all situations in life. Dr. Mathur, then introduced the Chair of the Panel Discussion, Dr. Mythili P Rao, Dean of Languages and Research Coordinator, Jain (Deemed-to-be University), who very poetically captivated the audience and then further introduced the panelists.

Mr. Mohammed Shafiulla R, a Jain University Bachelor of Arts student, threw light on the subcultures and diverse nature of the Indian demographic. He emphasized on the importance of a more accepting and accommodative governance, towards all communities and its members. Shafi also spoke about false information, misinterpretation and the turmoil caused by hearsay along with other areas in our society and nation today that needed improvement. He specifically spoke of the 'post-truth' world that we live in today.

The next speaker, Mr. Chirag G Pradeep, a Biotechnology Masters student at CPGS-Jain University, had very strong thoughts on the role of youngsters in shaping the future being the majority age group in India. He emphasised on each person contributing to the necessary changes by actively working towards it and being service minded humans for the sake of not only the country, but the human race and the planet as well.

Ms. Arishmita Aditya, a Post Graduation student of Media and Communication at Christ University, and former undergraduate of Jain, gracefully wove together theoretical frameworks of the nation-state, citing Benedict Anderson, questioning the ideological framework within which we stand today. She also mentioned the unfortunate yet severe impact of misinformation and disinformation pertaining to social media and its influence on people in current times.

The last speaker was Mr. Punith Raj KN, founder-CEO of an EdTech company-Seminar Room and a Ph.D Research Scholar at Jain University. He emphasized on the contrast of the western definition of a nation with that of all of humanity being one, and stressed on the need of harmony with each other irrespective of normative nationality. Mr. Punith also pointed out the ideology of the sacred motherland-Bharat, and the thought of all things and people around us being our own.

The session was then concluded after each panel member were asked to give two points that according to them, were important necessary changes to strive towards for a better future as

a nation. Questions from the audience were also addressed by the panelists. It was an engaging afternoon of four brilliant, actively vocal panelists, who reflected on the past of India, and defined the requirements to be met by younger generations to bring about positive change for all Indians in the future. The varied backgrounds of the panelists and audience ensured the coverage of a broad spectra of views and ideals.

## **GENDER WISE**

### **KAMLA BHASIN – A DEFIANT POWER IN A PETITE FRAME**

I have had no personal interactions with the renowned feminist Kamla Bhasin. Yet, I grieved at hearing the news of her demise on 25<sup>th</sup> September. I knew it was inevitable as she was recently diagnosed with an advanced stage of liver cancer. Yet the loss was painful. It was personal.

I grew up reading her books – *What is Patriarchy?* (1993), *Understanding Gender* (2000), *Exploring Masculinity* (2004), and *Feminism and its Relevance in South Asia* (2004). These have been and continue to be my bible for the courses I teach related to feminism, feminist jurisprudence and feminist strategizing. A former student of mine who plans to get married shortly, asked me for simple books on feminism for his parents to read and understand, and these are what I recommended. I have sung feminist songs written by her (such as my favourite – “*Tod TodkeBandhano Ko*”) since 1994 when I stepped into the world of feminist activism. I read her re-written nursery songs much after my children grew up!

Her quips, one liners, jokes and her innate and wicked sense of humour were both endearing and memorable. “Don’t fall in love, rise in love!;” “I don’t have a Powerpoint, I have power and that’s the point;” “They demand not just Copper T but property;” “Women’s place is in the house – so it’s a good enough reason for them to be in both Houses of Parliament;” “We believe in the right to copy, not copyright” are a few among innumerable such one liners. The book she authored - *Laughing Matters* (2004) – contains many such quips. One of the jokes in her book says “We are feminists! We are against ALL HIERARCHY! But yes, sometimes, there is some ANARCHY in our group!” and another - “We wanted to have collective-decision making ... all we achieved was collective paralysis!” These are symbolic of the Indian women’s movements’ capacity to laugh at themselves.

My earliest memory of seeing her was at the fourth World Social Forum – the biggest annual event of the anti-globalization movement - held in Mumbai in 2004. I remember her leading us to a “laughter therapy” session, and I thought – she is unlike any other feminist persona I have known! She spoke about why women’s movements was allied with anti-globalization forces, and how the economic globalization had pushed more and more women to the margins, causing social and economic deprivation. A decade later, when I watched her speak to Amir Khan about masculinity in *Satyamev Jayate* (Season 3, Episode 6, 2014), I was amazed at her clarity of thought and her articulation in simple words, that patriarchy hurt men and boys through its construction of masculinity.

She defied many myths about feminists by just being herself – myths about feminists being man-haters, anti-family and anti-children; feminists being too serious and not laughing or enjoying themselves, and feminists being hierarchical and not interacting with the younger generations from a position of equality. She married, had children, continued to work and care for her family, and has inspired generations of young people, particularly but not limited to young women by singing, dancing, laughing, talking and writing.

I don't look at her work uncritically. Her construction of feminisms in gender binaries long after LGBTQIA+ rights' discourse entered the public domain in India, left me uncomfortable and distraught. Her emphasis on breasts and uterus left many transwomen and gender non-binary feel excluded at a time when inclusivity is the mantra. But her shortcomings only made her more human, and reminded me that all of us are on the learning curve - forever. I believe that this ought not to eclipse the many significant contributions she made to the women's movements in India and South Asia, by leading Sangat, One Billion Rising and by being the oxygen that she was for South Asian feminisms!



***Dr. Saumya Uma (she/her)***  
***Professor of Law &***  
***Director - Centre for Women's Rights***  
***Jindal Global Law School***  
***O.P. Jindal Global University***

### **VIEW FROM THE FIELD**

I have always operated on the assumption that my day to day work itself is an ongoing field work because I work with children and my thesis is on children. I had however worked out a methodology of doing the field work for my Ph.D with an expanded base of children with the advice of my guides Dr Sandeep Shastri and Dr Priyanca Mathur. Something that seemed so simple took complicated dimensions when Covid 19 hit last year. It was like my research work had to be refrigerated and shelved because I had more critical life-saving initiatives that I had to get engaged in. When I was distributing food provisions in the heart of the slums the whole of 2020 and then vaccinations in 2021, my PhD was the last thing on my mind.

The schools have been closed for more 17 months and only a few schools have managed to do online classes. There has been a great deal of uncertainty of the safety of children if schools were to open. So when the schools did open from the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2021, for the age group that I am working with, I did not want to waste a moment to seek permissions to

administer the qualitative and quantitative questionnaires and focus group discussions. I know that many school administrators questioned my sanity when I kept urging for a definitive date. I have to date done my field surveys in 6 schools and there are 6 more to go. While the photographs I have taken denote an organized event, there are many layers of stories behind each photograph. I am seeing first-hand the impact of the pandemic on children and education.

The stark disparity between the privileged and underprivileged students that I have been talking about all these years has multiplied in intensity and is staring at my face. But both the rich and the poor children are showing an indelible impact of the pandemic in their mental health and social interactions and I fear that this is definitely going to affect their decision making for life and career choices in the future. My learning from dealing with nearly 300 students so far is that we will see a certain indent on the students' personalities when they become adults. Their approach towards higher studies, technology and relationships will see a shift, to say the least. It is not an exaggeration to therefore to say, that we need to pay special attention to young people showing symptoms close to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Syndrome because many of them have seen death of loved ones at close quarters and most have sensed the anxiety that their parents have been going through. It was distressing for me to see that students who were otherwise friendly and spontaneous have become guarded and reticent to interact with each other. One can console oneself and say that all this is temporary and things will become like before when things become normal. That leads us to question the term "normal" in the years ahead.

This is not just idle musings but a deliberate action plan that will impact my research as well. I feel that most social sciences and public policy research even if it has already commenced, has to change directions slightly and include the impact of Covid 19 in their domain of work. Field work has to throw open what exists in reality and the impact of pandemic is very much a reality. I know my thesis will include Covid 19 although I had never even imagined it earlier. Covid 19 embedded in my field work will keep the memories alive.



***Ms. Shukla Bose of CEO, Parikrma Foundation and Ph.D Research Scholar in Public Policy at Jain (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru***

## **REPORTS OF EVENTS**

### **Report of IIPA-KRB Prelude Conference**

JAIN (Deemed-to-be) University and the Karnataka Regional Branch of the Indian Institute of Public Administration came together to organise a Virtual Prelude Conference on the theme of the IIPA Annual Conference-2021, "*Atmanirbhar Bharat – Opportunities and Challenges*" on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Prof. (Dr.) Raj Singh, Vice-Chancellor of JAIN University made the

Lead Presentation, where he referred to the various dimensions of the *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan* of the GOI, the evolving eco-system under which it is operating and the need for developing a Skill-Entrepreneurship-Innovation Zone (SEIZ) in every University. He identified five current issues that needed to be addressed: Governance and Policy; Cost Competitiveness; Skill Upgradation; Lack of Research Focus; and Financing. Quoting Maharishi Patanjali, Dr. Singh said that the lofty objectives behind the programme do provide the inspiration to galvanize the eco-system.

Dr. Sowmya Prashanth from the Faculty of Economics of Karnataka State Rural Development and Panchayat Raj University, Gadag looked at the concepts of *Swadeshi* and *Self-Reliance* in *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. Her major findings were as follows: *Atmanirbhar Bharat* is akin to '*Poorna Swaraj*'; the five pillars of *Atmanirbhar Bharat* are in tune with Gandhi's Constructive Programme; the scheme comes within the ambit of Gandhi's vision; strengthening of the Indian economy would simultaneously strengthen the Gandhian village economy; the scheme focuses on technology-driven and not technology-dependent systems; and there is a co-existence of cottage industries with big industries. However, its success would depend on factors like ensuring self-reliant, holistic and sustainable development; creating a conducive environment for *Ease of Doing Business*; focusing on bilateral trade agreements; stimulating innovation, research and development; respecting competitive federalism; creation of infrastructure; and by ensuring the required cultural shift.

Dr. Pawan Kumar Taneja, Faculty at the IIPA, New Delhi, and the author of the Theme Paper on the subject, was the Guest of Honour at the Prelude Conference. He said the *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan* has been announced at a time when the world is talking of self-reliance, against the background of the backlash of China's model and hyper-globalization hurting domestic economies. The scheme needs to be understood in terms of the concentric circles of *Reform – Perform – Transform – Zero Defect – Zero Effect*. The government has a big role to play in terms of regulating market failure and maintaining the macro-economic balance. Two big challenges were those of employability and skill development, he concluded.

In the discussion which followed, Dr. A. Ravindra, IAS (Retd.), former Chief Secretary of Karnataka referred to a few Big Questions that needed to be addressed: Can globalization be wished away? How easy is it to restrict consumption in a market economy? And can rural-urban migration be prevented?

Mr. S. Ramanathan, IAS (Retd.), Chairman of the Karnataka Regional Branch of the IIPA presided over the deliberations. Dr. Priyanca Mathur, Associate Professor, CeRSSE, at JAIN (Deemed-to-be University) welcomed and introduced the speakers, and ably anchored the event. Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar, Secretary of IIPA-KRB and Dr. K.C. Smitha, Assistant Professor, CeRSSE, Jain (Deemed-to-be University) proposed a vote of thanks.

## **CREATIVE CORNER**

### **Gulmohar**

The trees bleed red with  
the blossoms of dawn,



scattered, clinging as a bunch of clusters.  
As the wind swoops in  
they sway and hold,  
tightly with the tips of their petular digits.  
I swoon, write poetry on the distant specks of red,  
Ones survival another's romance.  
Unkind and unforgiving we think our world,  
As they grasp one another to postpone their inevitable doom.  
The sliding windows, the ghastly roads, the delectable skies and the howling wind,  
Words are all we have, hooked as anchors to the withering present,  
And somewhere along the way, lamentation of the trees became so alien to us.  
Down by the pavement they gently crash, to be forgotten, a memory of fallen flowers,  
And a washed down man etch their history at the dusk in the dark.



***Sangeeth is Ph.D Research Scholar in English at Jain (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru.***

### **THE RISING RESEARCHERS**

A Panel from Jain (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru was chosen amongst entries all over the world for has been accepted for presentation at the **Global South Women's Forum 2021 in September 12-16, 2021**. The Panel Presentation was titled 'Women, Marginalisation and Displacement – Feminist Perspectives from the Global South'.

It was a collective multi-disciplinary panel covering the disciplines of Public Policy, Political Science, Economics and English.

The Presenters in the Panel comprised of -

**Suhasini Srihari** – Writer, Former Faculty in English, and Ph.D Research Scholar in English, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru

**Papiya Bhattacharya** – Journalist and Ph.D Research Scholar in Public Policy, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru

**Roshni Sharma**, Adjunct Faculty in Political Science and Ph.D Research Scholar in Political Science, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru

**Tania Sengupta**, Assistant Professor in Economics, Mount Carmel College, Bengaluru and Ph.D Research Scholar in Public Policy, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru and

**Priyanca Mathur**, Associate Professor, Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CeRSSE), JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru.

The panel presentation was in a narrative and story-telling format (than academic paper readings) on the themes of climate colonialism, climate mobility and migration, women's health and environmental justice, involving narratives of women (also displaced), impacted by climate change and other precarities within the normative framework of feminist theorisation of the Global South. It looked at women's health and environmental justice. Climate-induced migration and its repercussions on gender has become a widely accepted phenomenon. Gender remains at the heart of any study on mobility, where it has become essential to understand the impacts of climate-induced migration on gender and the influence of gender on migration. This intersectionality lens is, therefore, indispensable to understand the interaction between gender and climate-induced migration in the context of how it shapes the experiences of men and women differently. In such a discourse women affected by climate are usually considered as vulnerable within the global south, as they lack the capacity to migrate and are dependent, in comparison to the women belonging to the global north who are seen as the champions in dealing with climate change. The panel explored the gendered nature of natural calamities as research has shown women to be more vulnerable with a higher mortality rate, taking examples from cyclones like Gorky in Bangladesh to the recent Amphan in 2020 and the hard-hitting fact is that, though natural disasters have showed their gender discriminatory impact towards women till date in many countries like India, Bangladesh etc have no women centric disaster management policy. The presentation spotlighted this policy lacunae. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a gendered impact and so it also looked at women and communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases as well as the effect of the pandemic on regular health monitoring.

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