



Editorial

The pandemic has brought the whole of humanity, across constructed and contrived boundaries, together on a 'war foot'. But, unlike the wars fought between countries and fellow humans, here the 'enemy' is invisible to the naked eye and the losses accrued have impacted the whole of humanity. After passing through a terrible period of uncertainty and global grief, we were about to write this editorial with a sigh of relief and hope, when we were hit by the new variants of the coronavirus, one after the other, on the swirl to subvert this nascent confidence and hope of many in similar circumstances. The 'war' has been extending beyond what we might have thought of, planned for, and was prepared to face.

Responses to the pandemic differed between sections of the population. A section hurriedly defined and called this situation a 'new normal' one. It is, in fact, not a new 'normal' situation to many, especially to the marginalized and downtrodden. Attempts to normalize this abnormal situation did not spare any sector of modern production. Education is no exception with its extensive use of online teaching-learning methods. Social systems are geared up to facilitate the race of humanity to reach a goal that they do not know, this time with the intrusive and extensive use of science and technology. Wearing a mask (partially hiding one's face), social distancing (in fact, physical distancing), periodic vaccination, lockdowns and other such scientifically proven measures to fight against the 'invisible enemy' are to be considered normal? Although these efforts have proven effective in our fight against the virus and for our 'physical survival', the meaning and experience of human life have become more complicated. We fear that the tendency to proceed further by considering this a 'new normal' situation would reaffirm the present contingency situation, and destroy our hope for recovery.

We bring to you the present issue of the Artha Journal of Social Sciences with a hope for recovery from this abnormal situation. We have five interesting articles and a book review in the

present issue. In *Covid-19, Risk and the Global Society of Mask*, Rebwar Karimi discusses the challenges posed by the COVID 19 pandemic against a larger framework of risk society. Karimi looks at how 'modern society is increasingly exposed to its dynamics and is unable to control the risks it produces itself.' This is exacerbated by incidents like the COVID 19 Pandemic. The paper looks at how different parts of the world have coped with the changes induced by the pandemic which in turn gives rise to a crisis of trust at both interpersonal and institutional levels as the world learns to deal with the 'new normal'.

The article titled *Universalism and Particularism: A Fraserian Approach to Human Rights* by Palak Singh and Gopal Krishan Parihar looks at the concepts of 'Universalism' and 'Particularism' and how they can work in a complementary manner as in the concept of 'Universal Human Rights'. They have used the lens of the Fraserian 'status model' to situate the issues of social justice, identity politics, and the struggle for recognition within the domain of human rights with special emphasis on the rights of women and the LGBTQIA+ groups.

Amarjeet Singh addresses the migration of people from Bangladesh into the North-Eastern states of India in his article titled *Invisible Migration in India's North-eastern Region*. This movement is referred to as invisible given the absence of official recognition of the same from both countries. Singh examines the consequences this migration has had in terms of the shifting composition of the population in the North-Eastern states and the impact of the process. The paper also addresses the debates surrounding the National Register of Citizens.

In their paper, *The Impact of Women's Status on Human Development*, Tridisha Bharadwaj, Siddharth and Rijul Alvan Das look at how there is a need to promote gender inclusive policies which in turn would help in the attainment of national and global development needs. The authors have looked at status in terms of economic opportunities, political empowerment, bodily autonomy and freedom of choice. Their research makes use of data from various sources such as the Human Development Report, Global Gender Gap Report and the World Bank Database to test the

development models and make the case for the need for gender equality.

In their paper titled *Family Planning Policies and Sex Selective Abortions in India: Does the former elevate the latter?*, Megha Jacob, Anu Maria Joseph, and Kavya Raju examine the relation between family planning policies and sex selective abortions with special emphasis on India through an analysis of data from NFHS IV. Their research looks at how stringent family planning measures that focus on limiting the number of children can contribute towards higher rates of sex selective abortions in patriarchal societies with strong practices of son preference. This can result in 'female genocide'. They also question the need for such stringent policies given the declining fertility rates in most parts of India.

Reena Merin Cherian has reviewed *Many Voices, Many Worlds: Critical Perspectives on Community Media in India* by Faiz Ullah, Anjali Monteiro and K. P. Jayasankar. The review provides an overview of insights into this edited volume that looks at the various mediums used by communities including the marginalized and subaltern groups 'to voice and speak their experiences' through its focus on 'many' worlds in the title of the volume.

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