

EDITORIAL NOTE

'PANDEMICS, PEOPLE, POLITICS: CHALLENGES AND FUTURES' – VOLUME 5, 2021

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The 2021 Volume (Volume 5), is focused on the theme, 'Pandemics, People, Politics: Challenges and Futures'. COVID-19 has been understood, felt, and analysed as the 'crisis' it has been, unparalleled as one of the impactful disruptors in recent times, with global and far reaching effects. As is apparent from its etymological root, the pandemic has been experienced as a *worldwide* disruption, felt across all across the world in everyday forms of life (including the publication of this issue), as also highlighting global inequalities and fissures, inadequacies in health care, state repressions, and public mental health crises.

The Volume carries not only relevant and fascinating papers on these broad aspects of the theme, as well as reviews of recent books, but also carries immediately pertinent interviews – conversations with Prof. Shakuntala Banaji (Professor of Media, Culture and Social Change in the Department of Media and Communications at LSE), and with Dr. Aqsa Shaikh (Associate Professor at the Department of Community Medicine, (HIMSR), and Nodal Officer for a Covid Vaccination Centre in Delhi).

Quite evidently, as a volume begun during the pandemic, this particular project has come together in extremely fractured times and circumstances, and fighting all manner of odds. The disruptions faced by the Editorial Board during the pandemic, include not only logistical problems, but also the singular and collective experiences of loss, trauma and grief, and mirror the very discontinuities under scrutiny in the excellent contributions contained within these pages, from scholars both within and outside India. These intensities and concerns are amply articulated by the authors of the papers in this Volume, and focus not only on the pandemic as the global health crisis it was, but also on the political economy of pandemics/plagues in general, and how they impact broader challenges especially relating to the historical, legal frameworks, and other connected implications for questions of livelihood, labour, civil liberties and freedoms.

COVID-19 even now, remains an ongoing crisis, with possibly long term, continuous effects. It has produced and amplified multiple social and political emergencies worldwide, including regime

and policy changes, and shifts in erstwhile democratic spaces, in conjunction with compounding planetary and ecological disasters, class inequalities, and oppressive impositions.

It is, in the final instance, an ontological turn, and whether it is a *turning away* from long held values of the social contract, or an evolutionary *turning towards* greater utopian possibilities, and collective palliatives, remains to be seen.

Note: Publication of Volume 5 of the Journal has been delayed due to the pandemic, and is highly regretted.