



V.V. Giri National Labour Institute

Integrated Labour History Research Programme

**(Jointly operationalised by VVGNI and
Association of Indian Labour Historians)**

Online Workshop on Technology and the Future of Work

31 March 2021 (10.30-13.30 hrs.)

The world of work is in a churn. A cluster of digitally driven technologies ranging from automation and robotics to artificial intelligence and the internet of things – collectively referred to as the ‘Industrial Revolution 4.0’ or the ‘Second Machine Age’ – has kindled profound transformations in the world of work. The COVID-19 pandemic and the massive economic and social disruptions caused by it have dramatically pushed to the fore the rapid transformations in the workplace. If the earlier mass production technology and factory work had facilitated the separation of home and work, the contemporary technological advancements have enabled millions to work from home. This, of course, has longer-term implications for the links between technology, work and society.

Technology, along with its relationship to society, has been a subject that has engaged the attention of economists, philosophers, historians and creative artists at least since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century. There is, however, a specific temporal context to the current churn – not only in the nomenclature of the technological revolution (Version 4.0, Second Machine Age, etc.), but also in the way the change has emerged at the cusp of a shift in the economic/developmental discourse triggered by the crisis of contemporary capitalism. It would seem that the long wave associated with globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation since the 1980s – which had transformed the earlier notions of work and the relation of work and society – is itself facing a serious challenge in terms of contemporary technology-driven transformation.

The great recession triggered by the financial crisis of 2008 provides the context in which the meaning of work and relation between work and society are being profoundly questioned. The current technological transformation is seen to have a far-reaching impact not only in the advanced countries but also in the developing countries. The models of

development of the last three decades – based on expanding trade, global outsourcing of manufacture from advanced countries to the developing world, rising exports and consequent shift from low productivity agriculture to manufacturing and subsequently to services – are facing challenges.

Contemporary times are also characterised by the pervasion of technology into every sphere of life, and digital tech in particular, has dramatically transformed the way we work. This shift has also ushered in new avenues in the future of work. Despite being a development catastrophe, the COVID-19 pandemic has hastened a predominantly technology-mediated world. Besides a global transition to working from home, urban areas have moved their consumption of essential services to the home as well, due to the proliferation of digital platform businesses that connect buyers and providers through the medium of a mobile application.

How will the future of work pan out and what strategies need to be put in place to seize the opportunities and overcome the challenges presented by the transformations? These have become dominant themes in public policy discourse related to labour. In fact, the International Labour Organization, the oldest international organisation, chose ‘future of work’ as the theme for its centenary celebrations in 2019. The ILO came out with a seminal report, *Work for a Brighter Future*, which deals comprehensively with the changes confronting the world of work and sets out ideas to manage and leverage these transformations.

In such a context, it is important to outline the key issues emerging from the specific challenge of current technological transformations to see how technology impacts work and work relations – both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of work. Some of the key aspects to be deliberated in this Workshop include:

- Nature and spread of contemporary technological change, i.e. the degree to which it is historically ‘unprecedented’ and how evenly or unevenly it has spread across the globe;
- Question of automation and its impacts on and implications for jobs;
- Issues of rising income and wage inequality associated with new technology and their consequences;
- Changes in dominant models of work relations influenced by technological transformations and their effects on employment, workers’ rights and social security; and
- Policy options to respond to the emerging trajectories of the future of work.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

- 10.30 -10.40 **Welcome and Introduction to the Workshop**
Dr. S.K. Sasikumar, Senior Fellow, VVGnLI
- 10.40 -11.00 **Inaugural Address**
Dr. H. Srinivas, Director General, VVGnLI
- 11.00 - 13.30 **Panel Discussion**
Chaired by Dr. S.K. Sasikumar, Senior Fellow, VVGnLI
- 11.00-12.15 **Presentation by Panelists**
- *Prof. Prabhu Mohapatra, Delhi University*
 - *Ms. Aishwarya Raman, Ola Mobility Institute*
 - *Prof. Balaji Parthasarathy, IIT, Bengaluru*
 - *Prof. Vinoj Abraham, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram*
- 12.15-13.15 **Open Discussions**
- 13.15-13.30 **Summing Up**

REGISTRATION MODALITIES

Those who are nominated/interested for participating in this Workshop may kindly fill the following link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfcGE1VjQG1rOKhK5QKDsG83VJOvuDGU-V7uXg393aSn527Kg/viewform?usp=sf_link

Once the registration is accepted by the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, the participants will be informed the login credentials for the Workshop.

Date and Time:

March 31, 2021: 10.30 hrs. – 13.30 hrs.

Workshop Coordinator

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