

## **Report by BIKRANTA ROY for the Session: Capitalism on the Regional/Global Stage**

The XXVI Annual International Conference on Global Capitalism conducted by the Forum on Contemporary Theory in collaboration with Chicago Centre for Contemporary Theory and Bharatha Matha College took place this year from March 13 to 15, 2024 in Alleppey, Kerala. Session III of the conference was held on March 14<sup>th</sup>. The session which took place in the main hall of the scenic Lake Palace hotel, Alleppey had some very interestingly titled papers. As the title signifies, **Capitalism on the Regional/Global Stage** the speakers of the session dealt with broad subjects of mining, maps and the works of Charles Dickens relating it to the core theme of capitalism. The session was chaired by Sarah Johnson, a senior lecturer from the University of Chicago.

The opening paper was jointly presented by Malvika Nair and Kimngaihoi Vaiphei, PhD scholars from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Their paper ‘A Tale of Gold and Black Gold: A Comparative Study of Gold Mining in Mexico and Coal Mining in Meghalaya’ presented a comparative study of the mining activities in Mexico and Meghalaya and its related implications. One of the key terms brought by Nair and Vaiphei was ‘extractivism.’ The study, described by Nair to be in its preliminary stages drew emphasis upon the abysmal working conditions of the mining community. The paper also raised some important concluding questions related to land ownership, how much environmental degradation can be tolerated and finding alternate sources to mining.

The next paper, ‘Mapping the Indian Landscape’ was presented by Wahida Tasnim, a PhD scholar from Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar. Her paper dealt with maps as one of the colonial products that contributed towards revenue generation during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was immensely interesting to observe the cartographical representation of the early Indian landscapes. Tasnim’s paper also made an engaging point regarding the politics of using maps as an excuse for the colonial administration to expand their dehumanizing policies.

Pratiksha N Chavada presented the last paper of the session. Chavada, an assistant professor of English from M.P. Shah Arts & Science College, Gujarat presented the paper entitled ‘Critique of Capitalism through the Works of Charles Dickens,’ which spoke on the consumerist culture that became rampant during the industrial boom of 1800s. Commodification of humans, the ills of child labour, worsening sanitary conditions were some of the concepts that Chavada’s paper identified in the works of Dickens.

It was an immensely enriching session that engaged with the concept of global capitalism in their own varying ways. Especially interesting was the observation of capitalism being an ever-present entity albeit ignoble, from Dickens’s Victorian cityscape to early colonial cartography.