

## **Call for abstract**



# **A Two-day International Seminar-cum-Workshop *Democracy at a Crossroads in South Asia***

Department of Political Science  
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Emerald Bower campus  
56A, B. T. Road, Kolkata 700050  
**March 17-18, 2025**

### **Concept Note**

Antonio Gramsci once said that, the old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born. Probably this statement partially describes the political state of South Asia. Most of the economies in the region have been deregulated over the last four decades. As a consequence, with the rise of neoliberal economic discourses, these countries have been experiencing seismic political and cultural changes, thereby radically restructuring them. While these changes may benefit new elites and growing middle class, they hit the farmers and workers most. With the new trend of increasing collaboration between the state and the corporate sector, the institutions required to sustain and strengthen democracy seem to be weakening. In whichever South Asian country democracy started striking its roots, two major transformations have been palpable: illiberal turn in those democracies and rapid rush toward a neoliberal economic system. The legitimate foundations of political power with the concepts of the social contract, and popular sovereignty, which provided some credence to the democratic imagination in these countries, have been drained. The kind of competition neoliberal economy prefers as the cornerstone of society, can perhaps be realized through a state that, dressed in the form of a democracy, seems to unnerve and debilitate the rule of law. Over and above, in today's digital age, the spread of dis- and misinformation across traditional and social media poses a significant threat to democracy, whereas repressing political speech, in the name of truth, may also deny multiple histories and multiple geographies, and thereby may undermine the democratic ecosystem in South Asia.

Against this backdrop, the two-day international seminar proposes to examine the democratic backsliding, if any, in South Asia from multiple perspectives. It will, therefore, have the following **sub-themes** around which deliberations are likely to revolve:

- a) *Role of neoliberal economy*
- b) *State of political institutions*
- c) *State, Society and Culture*
- d) *Identity Politics*
- e) *Role of media*

The interested teachers, research scholars, and students may submit the abstract (in not more than 300 words) of their proposed paper to [polsc@rbu.ac.in](mailto:polsc@rbu.ac.in) by March 5, 2025.

Registration fee Rs. 500/- for teachers and Rs. 300/- for research scholars, and students (other than RBU). (Spot registration at the venue on March 17-18, 2025).