

# Preface

Close to a quarter century now, the world has been witnessing major changes in the patterns in consumption and production in the emerging economies, or the so-called BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) countries, or the ‘Rising Powers’, or, very recently, the ‘Fragile Five’. These are nations not only with huge domestic markets but have shown veritable signs of presenting themselves as sites of global-level production. This has implied a reconfiguration of production and consumption relations, practices and norms concerning technology creation and use, and, of course, adoption and shaping of standards.

India, with a sizeable middle class consumer base has drifted to the whirlpools of the globalization process as it opened up its economy in 1991 with economic reforms as key macroeconomic strategy. Even after over two decades of reforms, India has been a curious case of extreme polarization that thrives on globalization, corporatization, informalization and entrenched corruption in the sphere of the public. To address the nature, compliance and relevance of global standards in both the production and consumption processes that involve delicate issues in environment degradation, casualization of the workforce, and marginalization of the already disadvantaged poor, sick and the excluded has been a real challenge.

A national workshop on “*Two Decades of Economic Globalisation in India: How Have Firms and Consumers Responded?*”, forming part of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded research network on ‘Rising Powers and Global Standards’ based at the University of Manchester, UK, was held at the India International Centre, New Delhi during April 2011; it was organised by the Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR), Ahmedabad and supported by the ESRC. Esteemed participants of this workshop deliberated the aforesaid issues through excellent formal presentations and often animated deliberations. Part of the fervor could be attributed to the very diverse range of specialization in research as also policy advocacy that came with the rather small but informed group of scholars and practitioners. Other than the contributors to this volume, those who enlivened the event with their sharp and informed comments and presentations include M. H. Suryanarayana (Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai); Noemi Pezderka (Manchester Business School, Manchester, UK); Dinesh Abrol (Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, New Delhi); Rakesh Basant (Indian

Institute of Management, Ahmedabad); Pulak Mishra (Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur); Sukhpal Singh (Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad); Balwant Singh Mehta (Institute for Human Development, New Delhi); Rajesh Shukla (National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi); Rajeswari Raina (National Institute of Science Technology and Development Studies, New Delhi); Mukesh Gulati (Foundation for MSME Clusters, New Delhi); Bharat Ramaswami (Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi); and Bimal Arora (Centre for Responsible Business, New Delhi).

Most papers in this volume are substantially revised versions of those presented at the workshop, but also include a few others by special invitation. It has been a unique privilege to organise the workshop and learn from the proceedings. For an editor of a volume as complex as this, nothing would have been more rewarding than to have a group of erudite contributors staying kind, patient and pleasant all through. I am earnestly grateful to all of them.

Thanks are due to the project coordinator Khalid Nadvi (University of Manchester) and co-researchers, Rudolf Sinkovics (Manchester Business School), Peter Knorringa (International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague), Mansueto F. de Almeida Junior (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, Brasília) and Chris Chan King (City University of Hong Kong). Continuing discussions with them have been valuable. At GIDR, those who extended unbridled support in organising the workshop and beyond include its then director Amita Shah, Tara Nair, P. Rajeevan Nair, Kamlesh Vyas, G. Madhu and Gani Memon. At the University of Manchester, Marta Fole Pintos coordinated finances efficiently and cordially with the GIDR in connection with the workshop.

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It is hoped that these articles shall not only be substantive and useful in their own right but would, as a collection of essays, provoke deeper thinking which could inform and influence strategy with a critical perspective.

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