Can there be Online Classes for all students in India?

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the biggest disruptions to education, the world has ever known affecting more than 90 percent of the world’s student population. Many countries turned to online-based distance education to ensure that conventional learning never stops. However, some 826 million students (50 percent) kept out of classrooms by the pandemic do not have access to a computer at home, (recent study by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS, 2020) and the Teacher Task Force, 2020). Around 706 million students lack internet access and 56 million live in areas not covered by mobile networks.

Education at the cost of Life

A Class 10th student in Kerala's Malappuram district set herself on fire, reportedly out of a sense of helplessness as she realised that she would not be able to attend online classes. Her family had not been able to afford the repair of their television set or the purchase of a smartphone, either of which would allow her to access online lessons. The family was financially very strained and the girl was worried that she would be unable to study further. For the last two months of lockdown, the family had lost employment. The classes weren't available on the phone they have.

There have been similar concerns about the limited access to smartphones, computers and reliable internet connections mainly by tribal students in various parts of the country during the lockdown period and further as well, if online classes further continue.