

# CORONA PANDEMIC CRISIS AND POST-COVID-19 SCENARIO

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES  
AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS



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*Edited by*

**N. D. R. Chandra**



**AUTHORS P R E S S**

Worldwide Circulation through Authorspress Global Network

**First Published in 2023**

by

**Authorspress**

Q-2A Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi-110 016 (India)

Phone: (0) 9818049852

E-mail: [authorspressgroup@gmail.com](mailto:authorspressgroup@gmail.com)

Website: [www.authorspressbooks.com](http://www.authorspressbooks.com)

**Corona Pandemic Crisis and Post-Covid-19 Scenario:**

**Challenges, Opportunities and Future Directions**

ISBN 978-93-5529-124-0

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Printed in India at Thomson Press (India) Limited

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Changes in Local, National and Global Landscapes in Post Covid-19 Era

*Temjenwala Ao, Aotemshi I.*

### ABSTRACT

Every century a pandemic swirls the world towards a new direction. It brings the entire world to a standstill. Everyday life is affected with no assurance of what next! The minds that govern the people are set to twirl at jet-speed for quick remedies but nothing seems to work out. Change has to come and it always starts in the mind. We need a paradigm shift in our approach to create a New World Order. The world-wide lockdowns at varied degrees have left the people to set thinking what next. Economies have crushed; mass migrations are on the move; shortage of food; people out of job all over the world. All these factors have left many people to live in extreme situations. Very soon the world will witness changes in Local, National and Global landscapes. Necessity to survive will drive the people to till every uncultivated land. In Post-Covid-19, possibilities are there that skilled labour mobility will change the local areas to produce self-sustainable agro-products. The world have realised that over-reliance on a single international body is suicidal. The dynamics of survival instincts will transform the present landscapes into something unimagined. If maneuvered with wisdom it will be a boon for the world.

*Keywords:* Pandemic, New World Order, paradigm shift, mobility, over-reliance, globalisation, resilience, technology, solidarity, dynamics, mobility.

There is an old saying that every century a pandemic threatens civilisation. A pandemic like Covid-19 has brought the entire world to an abrupt standstill. The whole world is out of ideas and still seeking for answers to questions which no one can give with positive assurance. Like the pandemics of the previous, centuries Covid-19 too has set the minds of mankind reeling for change. The most important aspects are 'future security' and 'sustenance.' There is a new quest towards returning to the soil Post-Covid-19. As the age-

old adage says ‘Necessity is the mother of invention,’ today the world will go towards new dimensions where lives will thrive with the instincts of ‘necessity.’ This pandemic has made people mobile especially to their homelands. Skilled workers once absorbed in industrial sectors are now returning to their native places as livelihood becomes a necessity at the same time they visualise unprecedented situation. With the on-going economic surges across the globe, people are obscure about their future. At such a juncture one can speculate changes in landscapes from local to national and global spheres in geographical, political, economic, medical, education, religion and the list goes on. This paper will try to elucidate on change in landscapes as an offshoot of Covid-19 pandemic which will lead people to reframe their living standard with new normals from traditional mindset to critical thinking.

The world today is advancing at a rapid change. When we look at the timeline of the world every hundred years there happen to be a change in unprecedented parameters. The plagues that invaded human civilisation baffled people. It gave no clue of its origin, mode of spread or curbing mechanism. The plagues took lives in massive rates. It is worth examining the pandemic histories of the world to reflect upon its impact on mankind.

The Plague of Justinian hit Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, in 541 CE. It spread across Europe, Asia, North Africa and Arabia. The rate of contagion was so gigantic that it swept a population of an estimated 30 to 50 million people. According to Thomas Mockaitis, a history professor at DePaul University, “People had no real understanding of how to fight it other than trying to avoid sick people” (“How 5 of History’s worst Pandemics Finally Ended”). There is no statistics or accurate reports about how it was curbed but those who survived might have had better immunity. Another devastating pandemic was the Black Death which hit Europe in 1347 and claimed about 200 million lives within a span of four years. The plagues resurfaced in succession and in the year 1665 the Great Plague devastated Europe taking a toll of about 100,000 lives in London alone. People kept themselves indoors as there seem to be no other alternative to escape the plague. After this the world has witnessed epidemics of varied nature like small pox, cholera, measles, polio, malaria etc. The guardians of health sector put their heads together to get a cure potion. Life was no longer safe. In the year 1918, the Spanish Flu took the world by surprise. It wiped about



twenty to thirty million people worldwide. Nations and stakeholders came together to work out preventive measures. It was a pandemic which changed the entire outlook of the world. People began to give more importance to healthcare and insurance plans for personal health. Public health policies were adopted in the United States and many other countries. Nancy Mimm, a specialist in population health says, “In the 1920s many governments embraced new concepts of preventive medicine and socialised medicine” (“5 Advances That Followed Pandemic-History”). Following the pandemics we find that the living conditions of the people changed. Lives were lost but at the same time it left people to think, to reason. And this thinking process gave rise to evaluating the lapses, the causes and the areas to be mitigated for future protection. Before the pandemics most of the hospitals across the world were in pathetic conditions. The onsets of every pandemic made mankind realise the importance of healthcare system. Hospital beds gradually changed from wood to metal, sanitation and hygiene were given utmost importance. But the fight against epidemics still goes on. Wars have been waged at different scales throughout history. Peace-pacts have been made not to wage war but it did not bring a close to the experience of war in everyday life. Similarly, the discoveries of vaccines and antidotes cannot give guarantee to subdue any re-occurrence of epidemics.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caught the world off guard. Through this pandemic we are witnessing the susceptibility of mankind to unknown and unseen forces. Government policies at all levels across the globe are assessing the dimensions to picture resilience in landscapes pertaining to diverse sectors. There is an urgent need to mitigate the loss of lives and sustainability of lives in local, national and international levels. Financial sector is the hardest hit all over the world. The lifeline of survival is the sources of income irrespective of public or private sector. Covid-19 has left millions out of job. In our country alone people have started migrating from cities back to their native places. Life before 2020 seemed more secure when one compares with the present scenario where one can feel obscure and things in oblivion. It is worth evaluating the changes in landscapes at different levels.

### **CHANGE IN LOCAL LANDSCAPE**

When we talk about local landscape, it will address the rural areas. Along with the rest of the world in local areas the main challenges at

hand are: unemployment; e-education; e-governance; sustainable resources. In the local level policy makers have put their heads together in the so called “war room” to come out with solutions and strategies best suited to their place. It is alarming to witness the rate of young people coming back to their small towns and villages jobless. Education system has come to a standstill especially the government schools. Most of the private schools too are left half-paralysed. The digital mode of teaching-learning was something foreign in most local setups. Covid-19 unshielded the digital backwardness of the masses in rural areas. There is a huge digital divide. Digital connectivity has become the most viable mode of communication and progress.

Among the many the two landscapes in rural areas which need immediate attention are Economic and Communication infrastructures. We need a paradigm shift in our approach to create a new World Order. World order is a politico-philosophical concept related to the nature and objectives of human life, which is observed and analysed in the context of international relations. It focuses on issues of human society and seeks solutions to problems like war and violence, unequal distribution and concentration of economic wealth, social injustice, environmental imbalance and alienation of human being from themselves, society and mankind. In the rural local context the unavailability of industrial setups and private companies will create a huge gap to engage and absorb the educated unemployed. On the other hand; skilled labourers migrating from urban hubs need to be identified and assimilated.

There is a paradigm shift in economic and employment landscape. The hope of getting a job has become very bleak. Now the main concern is sustainability. The very reason the young population left their hometowns to cities was to engage in sustainable jobs. But the Covid-19 pandemic has huddled them back home crushed, frustrated and in dilemma. “Next what” is the thought in everybody’s mind. We are facing an economic tsunami. At such a juncture one can foresee shortage of food and resources; if not mitigated with tact and radical policies. There are many areas where this Covid-19 pandemic has taught the people to enhance resilience. One such area in local level is the landscape change in transport system. In order to boost the economy of the region good transportation is the first basic necessity. Many lives would have been saved had there been good road connectivity in all the rural areas. We

are going to live with this Covid-19 as long as its antidote is not discovered. Like HIV/AIDS and SARS, the people of the world have to adopt ways and means to learn to live with it. Good roads are like giving the people hope to upgrade their living. With good means of transportation the economy of a place will grow. The rural local mass can avail opportunities to sell their local products without much difficulty. Finished products from available raw materials can be streamlined into the market system in national and international platforms when there is good transportation. Policy makers in local levels who once were at loggerheads will have to come together to address the issue of good road connectivity and transportation.

The other area of change in landscape is communication infrastructure. This Covid-19 pandemic has brought back the theory of Charles Darwin like a “dèjà vu” where survival of the fittest was propounded and that the weak will go to the wall. Communication has become indispensable. Every organisation and institution will have to work out to build a strong communication structure. E-commerce will be the new image of business after this current pandemic. Employment sector in local areas will have to align with digital platforms for sustainability. With restrictions in physical contact, social distancing and other safety pandemic procedures “cashless” payments via digital mode has become the new trend in daily purchase of goods and commodities. Even the admission and fee payments for education have now opted for “online” system. With advancement in communication and introduction of high speed internet facilities the world is now progressing at an alarming pace beyond human comprehension. To curb the hurdles faced by the local masses in educational sector the policy makers and patrons must come up with digital study resources. In local levels many are coming up with digital-portals where all the subjects are integrated and made accessible to the students without internet connectivity. So, when such applications are created it will not deprive the marginalised learning community in extreme areas where internet and smart phones are not feasible. This will promote the literacy rates in rural local sectors. In adherence to New Education Policy, education should now focus to produce job creators not job seekers. To visualise such aims one need to introduce upgraded methods of teaching in traditional classrooms. Technology and textbooks can be incorporated with training to impart value education. In local landscapes vocational skill development subjects need to be applied.

This will elevate the living condition of the people as well as generate self-employment. Depending on the topography, geographical and available resources skill development courses can be streamlined. In a machine dominated world; we need to be more human to absorb, adapt and adopt new changes. Duckworth and Yeager wrote that “On the rise is a set of contemporary skills which includes creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, collaboration, communication, growth mindset, global competence, and a host of skills with different names.”

Knowledge is all about the information we get around us through oral, print or digital sources. For any change to happen, it starts in the mind. Unless people are provided with the essential tools of learning one cannot expect change. This Covid-19 pandemic has unveiled not only the digital divide but also the poor communication infrastructure which has hindered progress in rural areas. People are now aware of the importance of personal hygiene and sanitation. Wearing masks, using hand sanitizers, hand washing etc., have now become part of our daily life. All these awareness and sensitisation have been possible because of communication system. Good communication system is a major factor to harness and develop the skills in people. At local level; change in road infrastructure and communication landscape will go a long way in Post-Covid-19 changing scenario with the change in scope of living and new life-styles.

## **CHANGE IN NATIONAL LANDSCAPE**

In the national level; there will be many competitions in diverse sectors. Our society is pluralistic in outlook, democratic by nature and has potential for market economy. To grow together with others, good capacity building in developing visionary leaders is a clarion call Post-Covid-19. One major area of change will be in economic landscape.

### **Strengthening Economy**

A strong and a self-reliant economy allow us to be heard and offer more to the world. It is in our interest to support the collective global effort to mitigate disruption in global supply chains by increasing supplies of products where we have available capacity, and developing capacities where we have the potential. Examples include food and agriculture, textiles, E-commerce, IT services etc. These areas need radical handling and pragmatic measures to stabilize a

strong economy. To strengthen the economy, creating co-operative market channels at the national level to incorporate variety products from the states across the country will boost the economy of the common man. Today, people are health conscious. The demand for organic food products is very high. So, investment in organic farming will generate jobs and at the same time; the quality of life will improve.

In an article written by Vikram S. Mehta, “Post-Covid, lack of social security” there is a beautiful anagram of our ground reality when it comes to sustenance. He said that “The forest sanctuary of Binsar in Uttarakhand is a beautiful reserve where people from the cities will be happy and enjoy getting away from the clutter of development. The local villagers have a different story; they want a share of the benefits accruing to those living outside the sanctuary. They wanted electricity, water, health, schools and above all else, jobs. From this small place many young people migrated to cities for jobs. With the prevalent Covid-19 pandemic, they are back in their village. They want to work from their home because they fear social security in the cities. For this young population agriculture and manufacturing offer no scope in their dainty little village.” Likewise, there are hundreds and thousands of such stories where at national level economic landscapes have to change to open avenues through innovative policies. From the central government level; fiscal policies has to be reframed so that the states and local governments are given monetary resources to create social security. It is to be ensured that every person gets the basic minimum income for sustenance and livelihood.

The pandemic has ushered threats in eco-tourism, construction and management sectors. With the restrictions in movements of tourists and the fear psychosis associated with the Covid-19 virus, developing “Trust” in the people will take some time. Tourism sector is hard hit and will take time to recuperate from its loss. Many jobs associated with tourism and management has been lost. There has been drastic change in educational sectors, schools, colleges and universities have been closed during corona pandemic period. Hence, online education has been in vogue and students and teachers have been embracing the new technology because of the urgency of the situation. Even semester end and annual examinations have been conducted through online.

At national level a major change in landscape will be the manufacturing sector to build a strong economy. Though India has emerged as the fastest-growing major economy over the past few years, its services sector which contributes close to 55 percent to the manufacturing sector whose share in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has stagnated at around 16 percent. The government has also shared its intention of turning India into a manufacturing powerhouse and raising the share of manufacturing in India's GDP to 20 percent by 2025. According to Anuragh Singh, "Many of India's Asian peers with a higher contribution of manufacturing to GDP have been able to address the issue of poverty and unemployment better than India. These include Indonesia where manufacturing has a 20 percent share of GDP, Malaysia with 22 percent, Thailand with 27 percent, and China with 29 percent" (Centre Must support Country's Manufacturing Sector"). This shows that much need to be done in our country's manufacturing sector. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought an opportunity for India to prepare for manufacturing industries as many companies are trying to divert their supply chains from China. At national level much need to be done to stand to the moment in becoming a manufacturing powerhouse. Focus should be on the sectors that contribute greatly to manufacturing and those with growth potential. Some of these important sectors are Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Electronics manufacturing, Steel and Automobile. With special focus in these sectors there will be a massive landscape change in the growth and progress of our country generating millions of job opportunity and alleviating poverty.

A peek into the budget worksheet of our country shows that the highest percentage of sanction is allotted to defense sector. It is discouraging to see that our budgeting system is still traditional and rigid. This pandemic has proved that the strength of a country is her citizen's health-line and social security. Change in manufacturing landscape will usher in the dynamics of critical thinking and creative models of employment. At the national level policies are expected to be framed to invest in manufacturing areas where there is potential for growth in the international market. Chemical and pharmaceutical plants in India need a reorientation because the world will now engage more in biological related issues. There is scope of employment if our country can produce world-class healthcare utilities and medicines.

Electronic media is another major sector whose landscape will transform post Covid-19 pandemic. Many companies have started manufacturing electronic gadgets from mobile phones to tablets; hospital equipment's to teaching aids; and the list goes on. One can expect a drastic shift in Information Technology where everything will be done at home and from home within a span of few years. Traditional offices will be replaced by virtual workplace. Cramming of public places will slowly ebb away because most of the works will be done from digital platform. We will soon witness a revolution in education system too. Imparting education from digital mode will slowly upgrade to schooling from home. India's IT institutions are the best in the world. Steps need to be taken to absorb these professionals in the service of the country to bring innovative changes. Therefore; in the next few years post this current pandemic there will be a shift in working trend. Employment parameters will witness a new landscape. To mitigate unemployment much need to be done with resilience.

### **CHANGE IN GLOBAL LANDSCAPE**

At the international level the world has seen that we need more globalisation. Kori Schake, who is the director of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute states that, "Our problem is overreliance on single-sourcing supplies rather than on a multiplicity of suppliers. Another issue is overreliance on a single international health organisation malleable by the country in possession of its presidency rather than the web of many formal and informal groupings whose interests compete to produce Madisonian checks on power and provide a maximum of information as a basis for national and international action. Our vision for a better world should be an international order of greater connectedness and greater accountability" (Schake 331). The major change of landscape at the international level will be emphasis on self-reliance and a free world. The countries of the world have seen that powerful countries have used their supremacy in curtailing the trade economies of the world. Overreliance on manufacturing and exporting countries has exposed the vulnerability of dependency on world super-powers. The following are some core elements to develop a free world strategy: resilience, solidarity and shaping the international system.

Resilience means to ensure that free societies are strong enough to withstand threats from within and from outside. Many countries

will invest in developing critical infrastructures, health care system, education, and research development. Vanderbilt Professor Ganesh Sitaraman, who has written extensively about resilience, has outlined three strategic steps that should be taken:

(1) selective disentanglement to uncouple “the American economy from Chinese corporations, investments, and the Chinese economy in sectors that are of critical importance to national security”; (2) “diversification of economic partners”; and (3) “a coherent development policy – an internal policy to support and strengthen innovation and industry” (“Countering Nationalist Oligarchy”). These views are noteworthy because the countries of the world will now be apprehensive in investment policies. Many will opt for solidarity and self-reliance. *The Economist* predicts “the pandemic will politicize travel and migration and entrench a bias towards self-reliance. This inward-looking lurch will enfeeble the recovery, leave the economy vulnerable and spread geopolitical instability” (“Has Covid-19 Killed Globalisation?”). Post-Covid-19 pandemic there will be more threats to Environment related issues because resorting to self-reliance will compel the people to go for more infrastructure developments rather than live at the mercy of dominating countries. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) survey “Enhancing environmental health through better air quality, water and sanitation, waste management, along with efforts to safeguard biodiversity, will reduce the vulnerability of communities to pandemics” (“Environment Health and Strengthening Resilience to Pandemics”). The world will witness major change in Geo-economic landscape. People will engage more in self-sustainable resources and inhabit the once unexplored regions of the world.

In the international arena Technology and innovation will play a major role in transforming the outlook of the world post Covid-19 pandemic. The G20 Riyadh Infratech agenda, along with supporting notes from the GI Hub and World Bank Group provide further context on the potential benefits of technologies in infrastructure, including resilience aspects.

The G20 Riyadh Infratech Agenda presents numerous areas and examples where technology can bring benefits to infrastructure, including improving efficiencies across life-cycle, enhancing economic, social, and environmental value, enabling new markets. Technology solutions, for example, can improve resilience by enabling faster and more targeted responses to disasters. In particular, element 2.3 of the Agenda states:



Adopt new and existing technologies that improve resilience, adaptability, and response times in cases of natural disasters and pandemics. The better use of new technologies enables governments and policymakers to more rapidly target appropriate resources before, during, and after disasters. For example, geospatial data can facilitate real-time monitoring and predictive modeling to help forecast and prepare for disasters in advance or assess real-time damage and the infrastructure needs of affected people. Infratech can also ensure continuity of essential infrastructure services during a pandemic. (Source: G20 Riyadh Infratech Agenda)

With the current trend of technological advancement the countries at international level will brace up with maximum investment in IT sector. This will be the major landscape change post Covid-19 pandemic.

Transportation in all sectors has been impacted during this current pandemic. New innovative measures ensuring the safety of passengers in airports, train stations and other public transport systems will have long-term implications. Tele-working will be promoted as an alternative means of connecting with people. With the sensitisation of maintaining social distancing and improve traffic congestion many countries will improvise their traffic landscape. Mobility in big towns and cities will see a new discipline as proactive response for safety measures are being taken up by many countries. For example, in the United Kingdom, the government announced a GBP (British Pound Sterling) 2 billion package to finance transportation alternatives, such as walking and cycling, to alleviate crowded public transportation, also citing the increased interest in such forms of mobility during the pandemic (UK, 2020). The world will now focus on eco-friendly and healthier lifestyle impacting steps to emphasise on more spatial road mapping. It will keep in check the Green House Effect and minimize the emission of carbon. Renewable sources of energy will be adopted by most countries as this Covid-19 pandemic has proven to the people the vulnerability of mankind to biological advances without radical policies.

The world has seen the impact of overreliance on a single international body. We may foresee a landscape change in sharing the powers at policy making where private non-governmental organisations will also exercise their solidarity in contributing to various sectors. We need proactive participation not reactive courses. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the world closer at all levels. Internal tensions are prevalent everywhere but it cannot be denied

given the obscurity that surrounds the origin and prevalence of pandemics. We are living in a fast paced world with ever increasing technological and biological advancements. But at the end it is the lives of men that matters the most. As Martin Lee Mueller says, “We inhabitants of industrialised civilisation still live inside a human-centered story. The story articulates in the ways we speak, what we think, how we listen, what we hear. It expresses itself in the physical forms of our life-worlds, in our legal, political and economic institutions. It gives structure to the way we conceive of and inhabit both space and time. It shapes our encounters with other-than-human living creatures, as well as the larger planetary presence. This is the story of the human as a separate self.” This quote speaks volumes about man’s interrelation with his environment and co-inhabitants of the earth. It is to our advantage that we maintain harmony with the creations and create a new world order.

At the end, it is the heart that matters for good or for ill. In all the local, national and international landscapes it is the human mind that will frame structures in political, economic, geographical, educational and technological aspects. With the unpredictable nature of any epidemic like Covid-19 turning to a pandemic the immediate step is to opt for mitigating its spread. Resilience is the only viable move which can be achieved by keeping resilience goals. The future looks brighter if priority is set at all the local, national and international levels to provide social security to people and come up with feasible platforms. With good means of transport and communication people can improve their living standards. Digital markets and aligning e-commerce from local to national and international platform will boost the economy. With emphasis in manufacturing and other technological sectors in harmony with the environment around us, the landscape of the world will transform. The unexplored will be explored and the things gone wrong will be corrected with more resilience.

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## CHAPTER 2

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# India's Covid Crisis High Cost of Living, Higher Cost of Dying and Low Cost of Saving

*Gulrez Roshan Rahman*

### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has most affected the lives of people in India. It has affected economy, health and education in a kind of vicious circle. With the GDP growth rate taking a nose-dive, the already high cost of living has gone higher with all the appurtenances including the problems of unaffordable medical treatments and facilities and insensitive education system. Things have come to such a pass that even a decent and respectful disposal of the dead is not done either due to corona protocols or due to the high cost of cremation. Above all, the crux of the matter is a callous neglect of Nature, i.e. environment, ecology and climate, by the modern world lies at the root of the present pandemic, as has been forewarned by eminent expert. The need is a democratic decentralisation of the healthcare system, an ambitious health infrastructure, welfare oriented economy – all in an organic whole. The new normal normatives of the post pandemic world should take the foregoing aspects in all seriousness. An investment in health and a humane education will be an investment in the economy; therefore, the expenses incurred on saving humane lives will take care of the India's Covid crisis.

*Keywords:* Covid crisis, humane education, high cost of living, high cost of dying, saving human lives, welfare oriented economy, democratic decentralisation of the healthcare system, nature, environment, ecology

The COVID-19 pandemic arrived with great suddenness and with mind-boggling speed and scope, spreading so quickly that time has contracted and warped in ways none have ever experienced in a worldwide way. It is very difficult to know how to process and shape this moment into something familiar. Like much of the world, we don't know how to cope with this abrupt global newness because

there is no truly apt precedent to refer to. The past now seems intensely past. And the future seems far away and deeply contingent.

An oddly beautiful side effect of all this has been a general craving for contact which has, to my eyes, manifested into a greater sense of intentionality among people. Things which were previously either ignored or paid merely a fleeting glance, have become significant or immediately present. The distance we practised from one another as a matter of privacy or self-protection is now a requirement for life. We miss the old way of life because we always assumed we could, or would, embrace it if we chose to. How can one not be inspired by this, COVID apocalypse that has drastically transformed our perception of life and of ourselves. It was in early 2020 that COVID-19 global scourge struck India, and after ebbing for eight or nine months, its second wave has been ravaging lives here since February-March 2021. May be, we kept ourselves busy with everything else than the predicted health hazard and the mandatory preparations for tackling the lurking pandemic.

India is reporting by far the highest number of new daily cases globally, and over 4,000 deaths per day-figures that are almost certainly under-reported according to experts. India's second wave of the Coronavirus has not only created shortages of oxygen, medicines, ventilators, vaccines and hospital beds, but also and more pathetically so, of charge for funeral pyres, hearses and crematorium slots, forcing people to cough up exorbitant amounts to perform the last rites of loved ones.

The vicious cycle of the high cost of living and a much higher cost of dying in the times of Coronavirus pandemic second wave in India, begins with the hiring of an oxygen cylinder – fitted ambulance, and ends with hiring a hearse for carrying the dead body to the crematorium, electric or otherwise. In both the cases, the affected family has to spend four to five times the usual amounts. For COVID, patients who somehow manage to survive the fatal virus, find it very difficult to 'survive' the unabashed rampant black marketing of medical supplies, like essential drugs and tools and equipments, the unethical blackmailing of sorts in the shape of astronomical medical fees of physicians (although this may not be the rule), what with desperate relatives paying huge sums in a low-income country like ours. The whole medical establishment itself seems to be in a 'diseased' state of existence wherefrom the succor for the needy public is rather little or late in coming. As per reports, in the national

capital of New Delhi, oxygen cylinders have changed hands for as much as 70,000 rupees, twenty times the usual price and many times the monthly salary of the average Indian. Oxygen, an element which is so freely present in the atmosphere, has become the costliest and rarest of the facilities made available in the public sector healthcare set-ups. The height of unscrupulousness of the hospitals and nursing homes is that they tend to hoard oxygen cylinders, so as to make exorbitant money by supplying it to the needy, after much bargaining. As per newspaper reports, in New Delhi, police have made more than 100 arrests in cases connected with over charging, for oxygen, drugs, ambulance services and hospital beds. Almost all relatives and friends of COVID patients have overpaid significantly for medical supplies and oxygen. The medical racketeers are nothing less than 'vultures' with a greedy eye on our pockets.

As we know, India's Hindu majority cremates its dead and the huge number of deaths are creating backlogs at cremation grounds and shortages of manpower and raw, materials. Supply of firewood for funeral pyres fell short of the huge demand for the same because of the growing number of deaths of COVID patients. Due to local lockdown designed to curb the pandemic, there is a shortage of people to cut trees and those workers who are available are demanding much higher wages than the usual. This has created shortage of firewood and increased prices by at least 30 percent or even more than double in some areas. To cap it all, the priest has to be wheedled to perform the last rites by giving a hefty amount from ₹ 5000 to ₹ 6000 two to five times the usual amount as many priests refuse to enter crematoriums out of fear.

Perhaps, it is because of these reasons that people have immersed by way of disposal of the corona-inflected dead bodies, in the Ganga, supposedly one of the most sacred rivers in India. Recently more than 2000 bodies were seen floating in the river near Buxar and Bhagalpur in Bihar and in Uttar Pradesh. What a sad commentary on the disrespectful disposal of the dead due to COVID.

On the other hand, ambulance which is so crucial in taking a COVID patient to the earmarked hospitals as COVID care centres, has also become a luxury of sorts, as the family has to will-nilly cough up about 7000-8000 rupees for a ferry of about 6-8 kilometres. A surprising discovery of late in Saran and Araria districts of Bihar, shows dozens of high-end ambulances purchased from MPLADS funds have been left to rot in the yard on the alleged

pretext of non-availability of drivers, who are said to be unwilling to drive COVID patients. But on consideration of hefty sum, they are ready to wheel on whenever or wherever one wishes to.

To go back to the demand supply chain of our economy, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is on record that the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic in India has had a bigger impact on aggregate demand than on aggregate supply, but the economic slowdown was not as severe as a year ago. India reported a further decline in new coronavirus cases, but daily deaths remained above 4000 and experts said the data was unreliable due to a lack of testing in rural areas where the virus is spreading fast.

The RBI, in its monthly bulletin, reports, “the biggest toll of the second wave is in terms of a demand shock-loss of mobility, discretionary spending and employment, while the aggregate supply is less impacted. The resurgence of COVID-19 has dented but not debilitated economic activity in the first half of Q1: 2021/22”. However, the loss of momentum is not as severe as at this time a year ago. The reason seems to be the localised nature of lock-downs, better adaptation of people to work from home (WFH) protocols, online delivery models, e-commerce and digital payments which are at work.

As Bhanu Pratap Mehta, a prominent expert and journalist, rightly points out the dire necessity of drawing a long-term strategy to manage the negative effects of the pandemic:

“Even as we battle Covid, we have to think about what will truly reverse the diminishing of our economic fortunes. The GDP numbers, like the Covid numbers, have become the object of regular anxiety and contention .... The GDP growth is close to 7.3 percent. India is staring at the prospect of slower growth, rising poverty, and a shrinking middle class. An investment in health is an investment in the economy, but our health investment is still in catastrophe management mode. ... A million plus Covid deaths is an extraordinary catastrophe. But the prospect of long-term economic stagnation should also give us nightmares. We are in completely uncharted territory.” (Mehta, *The Indian Express*, June 2, 2021)

Although, the impact of the second wave of COVID-19 on the employment sector in India has proved to be devastating – over 7 million jobs were lost in April 2021 in India. By way of fiscal remedies, the RBI unveiled fresh measures to help lenders tide over mounting bad loans and give some borrowers more time to repay their debts. Unless and until infections ebb in the coming months of 2021, productions will have to be curtailed in view of the demand

contraction, for which the present times do not augur well. India's second wave of COVID-19 is expected to decline by July 2021. Going by the projections made by the three member – panel of scientists set up by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India, a third and a more lethal wave of the pandemic will strike back, perhaps, around the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. Using SUTRA (Susceptible, Undetected, Tested (Positive) and Removed Approach) model, the scientists predicted that the end of May 2021 will witness about 1, 50, 000 active cases of coronavirus per day in the country, which will decline to 20,000 cases daily by the end of June 2021. Again, as Udit Misra, another expert, says:

“Of course, since then (end-February 2021), India has witnessed a various second wave of COVID-19 infections which has made India won the dubious distinction of being the worst affected country in the world especially since official disease and death statistics continue to grossly underestimate the reality. To be sure, looking at the economic disruption due to the second Covid wave, almost all analysts and observers have already dialed down their forecasts for India's GDP growth rate in the current financial year (2021-22 or Fy22). In fact there are some, such as the Moody's rating agency and Oxford Economics who now believe India may grow at less than the 9.7% mark.” (Misra, *The Indian Express*, May 24, 2021)

The most important point regarding governmental preparedness and a top-priority action-plan to tackle the toll of human health and lives, on the one hand and the economic havoc wreaked by the pandemic, on the other, is the cause of worry and pain. The state of healthcare infrastructure is in the worst condition, and its pan-Indian coverage or popular reach was not sufficient for mere normal health services, least of all, for a pandemic like COVID. Saving lives needs to take precedence over everything else today. It is feared that the third wave (if at all it comes) will infect around 50 to 60 crore people across India, almost half of the national populace. In my humble opinion, the right to health has to be made a fundamental right, since health is crucial to one's life. More than any doses of pseudo-nationalism, pseudo-culturalism, neo-liberalism, chauvinism etc., India needs morsels of food and doses of proper and timely medical supplies. Thousands have perished recently due to lack of medicines, ventilators and oxygen, in nation like ours, which is regarded as one of most scientifically & technologically, advanced, countries of the world, and one of emerging economic giants – the *Vishwaguru* in the making. The need of the hour is to set priorities afresh wherein



people's right to healthcare must be made an essential and integral part of the nation's agenda, with all sincerity of intentions and purposes. Provision of adequate and proper healthcare, medical facilities to the people in villages, *panchayats* and blocks should be ensured and only then the present pandemic can be handled at the grassroot level. The precious public fund, in the form of taxes, revenues, donations, loans and aids – should better be used on a top priority basis, for building up a massive supplementary health infrastructure, besides the general budgetary allocation for health sector. It may require about four lakh crore rupees, or even more, to reach the long-touted 'Health for All' mission. As Satendra Singh, a prominent medical expert commented:

“I would often be disturbed by passing ambulance vans – someone was fighting for their life, whether it's for a ventilator or oxygen. As a disabled doctor, I am aware that people with disabilities are more vulnerable in this pandemic – turned into-a-manmade disaster .... The daily struggle to get enough oxygen breeds a kind of moral cynicism born of powerlessness. We've been taught to save lives, not to resuscitate a failed infrastructure.”  
(Singh, *The Indian Express*, May 24, 2021).

Let statesmanship prevail upon political one-up-manship. It is an extremely important issue of saving lives of people who elect a government and an opposition, who are the soul of democracy. Certainly they deserve their due, they have a fundamental claim to a decent life, proper healthcare amenities and of course a respectful disposal of the dead at least. Villagers have no choice but to go *jhola chaap* doctors who at least provide the silver lining in this dismal rural scenario. Several state governments have stopped testing in private labs. They have stopped people from going to cities for treatment. Moreover, the challenge of tackling the impact of the pandemic becomes all the more daunting since the rates of infectivity are much higher as the virus keeps on mutating itself making the vaccine and medicines fast ineffective or less effective. When large numbers of people get infected, the governments' stock-action, as if in a knee-jerk reaction, is to impose a lockdown. Naturally then, government data shows declining numbers of patients, but these statistics are far from the truth, which lies conveniently hidden in the camouflage of 'lock-down'. I think, the term itself is basically a weapon of the ruling class ideology taking its cue from the history of Western Europe, particularly the period of totalitarianism. No popularly elected government, in my humble view, should have the legal and moral mandate to impose lockdown in such pandemic times, before it

makes sufficient arrangements for the bare necessities like food, shelter, medical supplies etc. of its constituents, the general public. Just huddling people like prisoners in their homes, and execute it through the policeman's baton, tells another story, not fit for a civilised society. More than anything else, India needs hospitals, real hospitals providing real health services, in villages, and a real decentralisation of our health facilities must be implemented for all of us to feel and save people's lives.

The idea of involving the local community in healthcare services is an old and time-tested approach to medical welfare in a democratic set-up. The example of the famous doctor couple Dr. Raj and Dr. Mabelle Arole who set-up a primary healthcare system in Jamkhed in the state of Maharashtra during 1970s, served as a model for the rest of the wave of a community participation in the delivery of health services. The crucial significance of a real democratic decentralisation not only of political power, but, and more significantly so, of healthcare system as well as of sustainable, environment – friendly development can be gauged from what A. Ghaffar and other public health experts have to say now:

“The most sustainable and effective partnerships are explicitly three way partnerships involving grassroots, citizens, local political leaders and technical health experts.”(Ghaffar *et al.* 4)

To quote Lahariya *et al.*, again, in this context:

“The success of face masks, social distancing and hand-washing will be limited till most people adopt and adhere to these behaviours. COVID-19 testing is voluntary and cannot be successful unless people start coming to these facilities.... If Kerala succeeded in battling COVID-19 in the early stages of the pandemic, it was because the village panchayat and elected representatives actively participated in the state's response.”(Lahariya *et al.* 112-13)

One of the most visible effects of the pandemic in India, both its first and the second waves, has been an economic slow-down, as a result of the complete and partial lockdowns at Central and state levels of the government. The pandemic, once again reiterated the ever known health-economy continuum. The more we invest in health, the faster the economy keeps growing. What is most needed, at this critical juncture, is to set aright our priorities, with public health reigning at the top. But, alas, India is still way behind in satisfactorily managing the pandemic.

The pandemic seems to have taught us an important lesson: never exploit nature, never take ecology for granted. Environment, health and economy are a closely knit triad – a *sine qua non* for the commonweal. A beautiful balance has to be maintained amongst the three variables for mankind's well-being. E.P. Derryberry and others, in a US study on the effect of vehicular traffic on the chirping of birds, have noted that “behavioural traits can change rapidly in response to newly favourable conditions.” (Derryberry *et al.*).

The writing, on the wall: “in Nature lie human health and welfare” should better be noticed by us, when little birds can do so easily. It is with this message as the central idea that Lahariya, Kang and Guleria conclude their treatise on COVID-19 pandemic in India.

“If birds can change their behaviour so quickly, we humans should do better in recognising the signals given by nature. The COVID-19 pandemic indicates the damage we have done to our planet and to ourselves. It is our responsibility to continue to learn and develop ways of improving our world, our health systems and our health.” (Lahariya, *et al.* 308)

Henry David Thoreau once remarked that ‘In Wilderness is the Preservation of the world.’ The experience of the Corona times in India seems to warrant a postscript, that ‘In Democratic Healthcare and Sustainable Economy is the Preservation of the Environment.’ This ecology-centred view of life is a matter of both national as well as global significance.

The noted writer of works of environmental history, Ramchandra Guha aptly remarks, “The fact that environmental degradation often intensifies economic deprivation explains the moral urgency of these movements of protest. There is then manifest a palpable sense of betrayal, a feeling that the government, their government, has let down the poor by taking the side of the rich.” (Guha 144-45)

What Guha says about the Penan struggle of the Spanish people in the aforesaid passage, may apply to the Indian context as well. He further quotes the Chinese poet Bei Dao, as translated by Geremie Barme by way of presenting the case against the mammoth Three Gorges dam project during 1988-89:

“I do not believe that the Chinese will forever  
refuse to think for themselves;  
I do not believe that the Chinese will never  
speak out through their writings;

I do not believe that morality and justice will  
 vanish in the face of repression;  
 I do not believe that in an age in which  
 we are in communication with the world,  
 ‘freedom of speech’ will remain an empty phrase.”

(Guha 184)

The words of prominent Brazillian environmentalist Henri Acelrad in this regard, seem an advisable quote:

“It is necessary to seek a kind of development that is not limited to preserving the supply and prices of natural resources as productive inputs,”

but

“... to democratise control over natural resources, to deprivatise an environment that is common to society and nations... and to ensure the public character of common natural patrimony (constituting) the agenda of issues (for the environmental movement) ...” (Acelrad Preface)

The only mandatory investment of public money right now during this pandemic affected times should be in health infrastructure at the grassroots level (building of magnificent monuments of ‘elect’ may wait, without the sky’s falling apart) and making drugs and oxygen affordably available for villagers will enable us to save many lives. We are expecting the vaccine will save us, but the fact of the mutating virus, on the one hand, and the low percentage of people vaccinated (due to short supply of Covaxine, Covishield, Sputnik etc. for domestic use) on the other, the scenario has become dismal. Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is working on an effective drug for its treatment as vaccine does not possibly seem to be the only solution to eradicate Covid-19. Hence a strategy of Multi Drug Therapy (MDT, which has proved very efficacious in containing and treating leprosy) – consisting of a few potent drugs and an all-encompassive vaccine, should be adopted for extricating us out of the COVID-19 quagmire.

Even grief seems to have lost its meaning and manifestations in the time of COVID, with the messages of people, known-unknown, near-distant, dying and dead, are too many to evoke the stock reaction of grief; grief prefers to be sanitized than be mourning. People think it advisable to skip the funeral/ cremation of relatives except of the closest ones. They seem to have metamorphosed into stones, while doctors, nurses and other paramedics face numerous deaths, many times the usual, daily, trying to save others’ lives, at a high risk of their own. Last week, while waiting to get her father

admitted to a hospital for Covid patients, Meena saw a nurse come and whisper to the woman in the waiting zone. The woman started sobbing, collapsing on the floor. The nurse, quite indifferently, told her to go and cry outside if she wanted to as it would disturb other patients. Saying this she walked away. The others present there did not show any sympathy, nor console her. Obviously they have turned into wax statues. The messages and sights of death have become too banal for them to shed even a few drops of tears, or even to show an iota of grief. Contrarily, some of us are busy making fast bucks through black-marketing of medical and grocery supplies, fleecing the 'sicks' in the hospitals, and worst of all, fleecing even the deads. So, rotten, swollen, stinking human carcasses keep floating on the sacred rivers like Ganges. This seems to be last ditch effort of poor people to ascribe a modicum of sacredness to their dead ones, which also perhaps saves them the high cost of cremation.

“The urgency of a well-coordinated holistic response to a pandemic situation like the COVID-19, be it the on-going second wave in the first half of 2021, or the more dangerous impending third wave feared to be strike by the beginning of 2022, can never be overstated. We have seen what a lack of such a strategic tackling of the pandemic has done to India. One may refer to what our national medical experts so emphatically remark about the people getting required medical facilities, too little, too late and that even at a very high cost:

“... In the days to follow, as the number of cases soared the available beds were rapidly being occupied by the COVID-19 cases. Most of the hospitals in the private sector were running at nearly full capacity with regard to COVID-19 patients. The principle of economics pertaining to supply and demand is of great relevance in the health sector as well. The rates of hospital beds and cost of treatment skyrocketed, and many private hospitals were reportedly charging from ₹ 50,000 to ₹ 70,000 per night for beds in the ICUs. Health services have nearly always been unaffordable for the poor and marginalised, they were now beyond the reach of even the affluent citizens.” (Lahariya *et al.* 99)

Again, the condition in Delhi is feared to be quite worse, like the most impacted New York (not to tell of lesser town, cities, or villages in India):

“The public acknowledgement of the need for more hospital beds in Delhi gave rise to a lot of speculation. Newspaper headlines started speculating if Delhi was going to be India’s New York City (the city of New York was among the worst affected in the pandemic in the USA).” (Lahariya *et al.* 100)

The most debatable point, nevertheless, apart from the ‘unhealthy’ state of health infrastructure (health, being on the concurrent list, is both a Central and a state obligation, but then, in a pandemic situation like the present, it should be on top of the national agenda, like a medical emergency) is – can education, like economy, not wait. While factories, industrial complexes, private and public sector activities have taken a back-slide, educational network comprising both schools and universities, has developed a paranoid stagnation with issues like completion of syllabus, holding online classes, extra classes, monthly unit tests, terminal examinations all these to their strange and utter denial of the great catastrophe that has been ravaging lives and altering the course of human history in an irreversible way. Reference may be made to the well-known academician Apoorvanand who notes, with a voice of intense pain and dismay that “Indian Universities are pretending everything is normal as the world around them is collapsing.” And, this equally applies to our schools. Our education system is behaving like the Roman emperor of the proverb: ‘Rome burning, Nero fiddling.’ One can very well see and feel the insensitive and tone-deaf nature of educational administrators and their refusal to take into account the destroyed or permanently altered lives of millions of citizens, countless students and their families among them. The heartless culture of online classes only refuse to give respite to students, from incessant classes, monthly unit tests and examinations which keep them glued to the little boxes on screen of either shared android cell phone, or laptops for the few. Due to poor internet connectivity in cities, and villages, demand for Wi-Fi installation is on the rise, despite its costs. Schools and colleges never cease taking fees, for the big drama of education has to continue, come what may, even if the humanity is face-to-face with a catastrophe like Covid.

No teacher, nor any online class, gives a damn to discussing the pandemic-its causes, spread, impact and remedies-with the students ever, except few perfunctory queries about their health and wellbeing. Nobody from the teaching fraternity takes the lead (lest the syllabus will be completed) to explain in detail what this pandemic means for human life with its far-reaching ramifications-like its impact on our physical and mental health and psychosomatic disorders, for our society, nation and the world, for our families and communities, for anything at all.

Like the bureaucratic ritualism of our health system, like the slogans being aired – ‘*Do gaṛ doori, Mask hai ṛarurī*’, ‘*Jab tak dawai nahi, tab tak dbilai nahi*’ or ‘A distance of two yards and mask is a must’, ‘No carelessness till medicine comes’, our education system, in similar repetition of the ritualism in the name of pandemic-speak, has limited itself to mere instrumental talk about the best possible platform for online learning – the relative charms of Zoom, Google Meet, and MS Teams – of the urgency of uploading. Pdfs of homework and assignments, of the indispensability of extra classes, weekend-school, and the importance of not missing a single unit test.

It is high time we should pause, and ask of ourself as to what exactly we are attempting to gain here. Are children not members of this society? Or, are they zombies, or just a puppet of the educational system? Or, are they mere members who have to be kept crawling for the sake of statistics of the education department? True, children may not understand the global or the national economy, they may not understand the arcane realities of viruses and laboratories, and they may not even appreciate the gesture of responsible action of one establishment, and the callousness and irresponsibility of another. But they hopefully know what life is and what death is. Perhaps they know when a grandparent dies, or when a classmate loses a family member, or when a neighbour or just about everybody they know fall seriously sick, or eventually die. The one great lesson that the pandemic has, perhaps, taught them, is to understand what it is to spend a whole year cooped up home, never travelling anywhere, barely seeing anyone, giving up all outdoor activity, play dates, sleepovers, practically all social life beyond the confines of home and immediate family.

These children and students do, infact, feel in their own impressionable ways, the impact of the pandemic on lives, in whichever circumstances the virus places its deathly hand on them, though they may not have the knowledge of the scientific reality of the pandemic, or the economic and political devastation it has caused. And yet schools, colleges and universities, non-chalantly carry on their business as usual, turning a blind eye to the pandemic, as if none of this matter at all. ‘Complete the syllabus’ seem to be the eternal war cry of Indian education system. Reality stares us from all direction – of children to share the single smartphone in the family to attend classes, children who make long treks daily or climb treetops for the best band-with, children who peer at tiny screens

from tiny rooms whose whole families lead huddle, constricted lives. Who cares? All these have to be sacrificed at the altar of syllabus and examinations, without any break. After all, who stands to lose, and what? This young generation, if not given some leeway from the syllabus-examinations boundedness, will be missing one of the greatest learning opportunities in human history, of all the learning trauma can give us. Simply put, this is pedagogy without a historical consciousness like a healthy body without a soul. Disturbing as this might sound, this is the destruction of a great learning opportunity – of what it means to live through what is the greatest global catastrophe of a generation, so far. Such a generation, growing old, will not be able to tell anything worth the while to the inquisitions of its posterior young generation. Perhaps, very few who survive this pandemic, will survive this education, indeed.

To perorate, the eternally important connect between ecology and human life stands in dire need today, of being transmuted into the ‘New-normal’ normative of post COVID world. An ecology-environment-friendly approach to postmodern, post-material development initiatives, a vast and effective network of healthcare infrastructure, a humane and value based education system: all these at least, should be viewed and pursued, with all sincerity of intent and purposes, as an organic whole, if the impact of the pandemic has to be contained in favour of the ever precious human lives, and of the advancement of world civilisations and cultures. Amitav Ghosh’s apocalyptic remark about the ongoing climatic changes fraught with all sorts of natural calamities and disasters may be quite relevant to quote here.

“The struggle for action will no doubt be difficult and hard-fought and no matter what it achieves, it is already too late to avoid some serious disruptions of the global climate. But I would like to believe that out of this struggle will be born a generation that will be able to look upon the world with clearer eyes than those that preceded it, that they will be able to transcend the isolation in which humanity was entrapped in the time of its derangement; that they will rediscover their kinship with other beings and that this vision, at once new and ancient, will find, expression in a transformed and renewed art and literature.” (Ghosh 216-17)

Or, in the poetic prose of Ramchandra Guha, in the Tagorian vein:



“It is what we know as the ‘global green movement’ that has most insistently moved people and governments beyond this crippling short-sightedness, by struggling for a world where the tiger shall still roam the forests of the Sunderbans and the lion stalk majestically across the African plain, where the harvest of nature may be more justly distributed across the members of the human species, where our children might more freely drink the water of our river and breathe the air of our cities. It is in this sense that the environmental movement has shown us a common future and multiple paths to get to it.” (Guha 201)

To sum up, this minimal cost of saving lives, once incurred and initiated in all earnestness will sure take care of the exponentially increasing cost of living and the cost of dying in these pandemic stricken times, and thereafter. Let us invest in health and education, for a better socio-political and economic edifice. Let us love nature and be blessed by her. Let us re-dedicate ourselves to re-building the real infrastructure, the rest of the superstructures will naturally fall in line.

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## CHAPTER 3

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# Relevance of Psychological Resilience and Coping Mechanism during the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Saumya Priya*

### ABSTRACT

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, which was towards the end of 2019, our lives have undergone a drastic change. This infectious disease soon became a pandemic, impacting the lives of millions at personal, professional and societal levels. The numerous strong actions taken by counties and governments to limit the spread of the coronavirus included lockdowns, social/physical distancing, community confinement, travel restrictions etc. all of which have had serious psychological implications. They have led to anxiety, mass hysteria, depression, stress and fear. Hence, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the psychological toll of this pandemic is quite far from being just a medical illness. The paper aims to examine the concept and theories related to psychological resilience, looking at factors that enhance resilience and thereby emphasising how it, along with other coping mechanisms, can protect and help individuals to adapt, adjust and thrive in the current worldwide adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Keywords:* COVID-19, pandemic psychology, coping mechanism, psychological resilience

### INTRODUCTION

At the very end of 2019, the globe became witness to the COVID-19 outbreak. The exponential spreading capacity of this virus captured the whole world in just a few months and it was on 11 March, 2020 that the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. And since then, this pandemic has remained a global threat, unimaginably impacting the multiple aspects of human life. It has proved to be a global public health emergency with detrimental consequences for not only the physical but also the

mental health of individuals (Schwartz et al. 984). Interestingly, the COVID-19 pandemic is characterised by peculiarities that have not been found in previous disasters such as prolonged insecurity and global economic and social consequences, representing a mass traumatic event (Horesh & Brown, 332). Since the outbreak of this pandemic, different forms of infection control strategies such as lockdowns, quarantine and social/physical distancing have been implemented across most countries. These in turn have changed some of our key life domains, impacting our personal mobility (e.g. activity limitations due to home confinement), interpersonal relationships (e.g. reduced face-to-face interaction), and occupational/educational activities (e.g. changes in employment roles and daily activities of workers and students). Recent evidences have showed that these pandemic-related stressful events and life changes have lead to serious psychological anxiety and distress (Ben-Ezra et al. 02; Goodwin et al. 01) and could be a reference of functional impairments consequential to common mental disorders, such as depression, suggesting a probable mental health toll (Holmes et al. 550; Ustün & Kennedy 83). And it is in such situations that “psychological resources such as resilience and adaptive defense mechanisms become essential in protecting individuals from severe stress and burnouts” (Di Giuseppe et al. 53).

## **RESILIENCE AND ITS EVOLVING DEFINITIONS**

The term resilience has gained a lot of popularity in recent times. Everybody is talking about the need to become resilient, more so now, in the face of the present COVID-19 pandemic. It seems to be on everyone’s lips but interestingly everyone seems to have a little different understanding of this concept. Some people argue that resilience is an empty concept with no real significance. However, the “widespread use of the idea of resilience across disciplines, sectors and professions suggests it is a necessary concept” (Knuth para 04). In my opinion, resilience surely is something more than just the latest buzzword. But what is it actually? Well, when tracing its origin, we find that the term resilience was first used in the 1620s and it has its roots in the Latin verb *resilire*, which means “to rebound or recoil” (Macmillan dictionary blog para 02). Moreover, the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary defines resilience as “the ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions” (para 01).

Interestingly the definition and usage of the term resilience has been ever evolving. The term resilience can be differently used and defined in different setting or context such as individuals, families, organisations, societies, and cultures. There are multiple definitions of operation depending on the field of its study. For instance, in the field of Engineering, resilience is understood as “the amount of disturbance a material can sustain before breaking” (Tredgold 80). In Ecology, it refers to “the persistence of systems and ... their ability to absorb change and disturbance” (Allison & Murphy 102). When used in relation to humans, numerous definitions of resilience have been proposed in the psychology research literature. Resilience is broadly categorised into four types – physical, mental, emotional and social. Despite the construct being operationalised in a variety of ways, most definitions are based around two core concepts: adversity and positive adaptation. In Psychology, resilience is defined as “the ability to bounce back from negative emotional experiences” (Tugad et al. 324). According to the American Psychological Association, resilience is “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, crisis, tragedy, trauma, threat or significant sources of stress” (para 04).

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE: CONCEPT & THEORY**

Developmental psychologists have long been interested in the construct of resilience, which has been broadly defined as “a dynamic process wherein individuals display positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma” (Luthar & Cicchetti 858). However, Dr. Emmy Werner, the American developmental psychologist was one of the first psychologists to study the concept of resilience. Her study was based on the lives of children who were raised by alcoholic, abusive or mentally ill parents. Her study concluded that these children, even after coming from such disturbed households, managed to cope well with the abnormal and traumatic situations in their life only because of the resilience they possessed. Later, studies were conducted to also encompass the idea of adult resilience. In the words of George A. Bonanno, a University Professor of Psychology, adult resilience can be defined as,

the ability of adults in otherwise normal circumstances who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disruptive event such as a death of a close relation or a violent life-threatening situation to maintain relatively stable, health levels of psychosocial and physical functioning .... as well as

the capacity for generative (i.e. capable of reproduction) experiences and positive emotions (20).

Though initially, in what came to be referred to as the first wave of resilience research, the focus was primarily on studying the characteristics of resilient individuals. However, a second wave of research in this area focused more on understanding the process through which individuals are able to successfully adapt or bounce back from stress or trauma. Psychological resilience is seen as more than simple recovery. It is rather viewed as a positive growth or adaptation following periods of disruption (Richardson 312). Current theories view resilience as a multidimensional construct, which includes constitutional variables like temperament and personality, in addition to specific skills (e.g. active problem-solving) that allow individuals to cope well with traumatic life events (Campbell et al. 587). Characteristics associated with psychological resilience include the use of active and adaptive coping strategies, dispositional optimism and positive emotions and purpose in life (Alim et al. 1569; Southwick et al. 261). Resilience theory argues that it is not the nature of adversity that is most important, but how we deal with it and it provides a useful framework to understand people's reaction to adversity.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AND COPING MECHANISM DURING COVID-19**

Speaking in psychological terms, a threat (of any kind), generally activates our flight-or-fight system. Typically, our sympathetic nervous system is meant to deal with short-term acute threats, for instance, a predator popping out at us whom we attack, deal with or run away from. But, in a situation like the COVID-19 pandemic, the threat seems to be chronic, of the most extreme kind and is definitely not what our system was meant to handle. Moreover, not only is this threat chronic, but it is also ambiguous. Unlike a predator, we can't even see this threat coming or going away. The coronavirus pandemic has proved to be a major threat on multiple levels from economic to emotional and physical to psychological. In fact, studies have shown that "worrying about infection and perceived susceptibility were associated with higher psychological symptoms including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder" (Wang et al. 1730). And all of these impacts have been feeding into our threat system. So, as a spontaneous reaction to it all, we feel compelled to either run

away or fight back. And since, we have no option of running away from this pandemic, we are left with the option to fight back or cope with this threat.

And it is here that the relevance of resilience and coping mechanism comes in. Various studies have confirmed the vital role of resilience in protecting one's mental and psychological health from the adverse consequences of any stressful and traumatic situations (Li and Hasson 08). During the height of the coronavirus outbreak, a wide range of studies showed that when an individual is equipped with adequate resilience, they are less likely to suffer from stress, anxiety, loneliness, depression and post-traumatic stress (Verdolini et al. 158). Resilience and coping are related constructs, but coping refers to the set of cognitive and behavioral strategies used by an individual to manage the demands of stressful situations, whereas resilience refers to adaptive outcomes in the face of adversity (Folkman & Moskowitz 752). While resilience refers to positive adaptation, coping techniques can be either positive (direct problem solving) or negative (avoidance or escape) (Lazarus & Folkman 34). However, these play a fundamental role in the management of the emergency and the related occupational stress. Negative coping mechanisms like escape and avoidance are generally associated with worse mental outcomes whereas having a positive approach towards the problem coupled with strong social network and peer support helps in reducing stress and boosting resilience (Zeidner & Saklofske 33). Thus, both positive emotions and social support have been linked to resilience and coping (Tugade & Fredrickson 328).

Thus, as we understand, our social world plays a significant role in enhancing our ability to cope with stressors and stay resilient in the wake of an adversity. Ironically, during this pandemic, most of us had a difficult time battling with the new, weird notions of physical distancing, quarantine and self-isolation. Recent studies have proved that long periods of minimum social interactions can result in a loss of the sense of identity to some extent. It can also hamper our sense of purpose in life, which can lead to the feelings of learned helplessness and depression. There have been several studies in the field of psychology especially that of positive psychology that throw light on how to avoid or overcome such stressful situations in life. Dr. Martin Seligman, the father of positive psychology has suggested some effective ways of building and enhancing our psychological resilience and coping mechanism. Seligman's famous 3 P's model,

which stands for personalisation, pervasiveness, and permanence, is critical to our understanding of how we bounce back from any hardship. This is so because psychologists believe that seeds of resilience are planted in the way we process the negative events in our lives (Booth & Neill 51). In addition to these, practicing mindfulness, staying optimistic and maintaining composure can help in managing the coronavirus generated stress and anxiety. Furthermore, Dr. Bob Emmons, the person most associated with the science of gratitude highlights the benefits of practicing the attitude of gratitude. In his opinion, when we focus our mind on the idea of gratitude, the focus tends to be on the good things that we are receiving rather than contemplating on the threats or the dangers. This as a result, will not engage your fight or flight response, rather engage more of that rest and calm response (Zautra et al. 226). Hence, resilience and coping can be seen to be the psychological equivalent of wearing a raincoat in the rain. It's not about running away from the fear of being drenched but being prepared to face what is coming. Thus, the components of psychological resilience have been used to reflect overall coping ability in adversity and are associated with adaptive psychological functioning (Connor and Davidson 78).

## **CONCLUSION**

Studies have shown that minimal amounts of stress and anxiety can be beneficial for individuals, as it facilitates higher concentration and focus, problem-solving and decision-making skills (Rudland et al. 42). However, stress levels that exceed an individual's threshold may negatively affect their physiological and psychological health (Power et al. 302). Although, we have been able to somewhat control the COVID-19 infection, particularly because of the vaccine developments, predictions on future scenarios point to a possible coexistence or recurrence of the virus. So, we cannot say that this crisis has been completely resolved. Rather, we are simply moving into the different phases of the pandemic as it continues to evolve. Hence, there is a great need to address the psychological aftermath of the pandemic for establishing a better mental well-being in the future.

It is also important to understand that resilience is a skill that helps maintain positive adaptation and normative functioning in individuals who are going through significant or severe adversities (Fletcher & Sarkar 15). And this means that psychological resilience is

not a fixed personality trait which either you have or don't have. It rather is a life skill, which one can develop and improve upon. And this is exactly what we need to do; strengthening our resilience and coping skills in order to better equip ourselves to face and fight this coronavirus pandemic.

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## CHAPTER 4

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# Life, Society and Literature in the Era of COVID-19

*N. D. R. Chandra*

### LIFE AND SOCIETY IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

I would like to mention here that I have spent my entire career in tribal areas like Bastar and Nagaland. While Tribal people of Bastar are yet to see the real glow of Development despite all endeavours of Governments, there are many reasons that Bastar could not yet be developed. Firstly, the money being allocated by the government for developmental activities do not reach to the people properly for the purpose they are sanctioned. Secondly, the area is covered with dense forest and proper communication to the remote villages is difficult. Thirdly, the area is also infected by Naxalite problem. Lastly, there are some outsiders who are working as middlemen hence they do not like that Bastar may be developed properly and they have nexus with other people also. On the other hand, Nagaland is a tiny state and English happens to be the state language. It is also located in the remote corner of North-East India. The Nagas are demanding for their separate land. There are many tribes; many of them are residing in remote villages. It is because of Education, English language and Christianity perhaps, they are conscious about their rights and education. I have been visiting Amarkantak time and again for meetings and academic engagements. If we examine closely, the tribal people of Amarkantak are living in the lap of nature with their meagre resources. There is a scenic beauty because of forest and flowers and chant of flora and fauna. Whether, it is Bastar, Nagaland or Amarkantak, my argument here is that the tribal life-style is quite relevant today for each and every one of us during the Era of Covid-19. In fact, we are living like tribal people in the wake of Corona Pandemic crisis. Some of the characteristics are as follows:

1. *Living in Particular Geographical Boundary*: Like tribal people, we are all living in a particular geographical boundary. Most of the transport facilities like flights, trains and buses etc. are not running because of lockdowns. Hence, we are residing in our own places and territories and movements are restricted to avoid corona infection. Now, the process of lockdown is lifted in a phased manner but the malady is spreading and increasing day by day.
2. *Living in the Lap of Nature*: During the era of Covid-19, we are living very close to nature. We are enjoying the beauty of the clear and cloudy sky, the shining and setting of the Sun, the rainy and sunny day. We like to enjoy sun bath and also we like to live very close to trees, plants, herbs and shrubs. In a way, like tribal people, there is a meaningful dialogue between the habitats and nature. Hence, there is little deforestation and pollution now and the animals, birds and other living things are enjoying freedom and autonomy in the lap of nature like tribal people.
3. *Indigenous and Herbal Medicines*: The doctors, Vaidyas and seniors are prescribing indigenous and herbal medicines to enhance immunity power. They are suggesting for Karha and Kalonji. Neem, tulsi, giloy, pipili, ashwagandha, soth, haldi, laung, green tea etc. Other indigenous and herbal products are being used in abundance to maintain good health. People are fond of local indigenous products today in place of fast food. They are trying to maintain good health observing the norms of balanced diet and yoga etc.
4. *Egalitarian Society*: More or less, people are leading like egalitarian society of Tribal people. Now, they have forgotten all kinds of discriminations like caste, religion, region, creed etc. and trying to help the needy people. Even they are providing food to stranded labourers and helping them in different other ways. They are showering equality and fraternity during Corona pandemic crisis like egalitarian society of tribal people.
5. *Reverse Migration and Return to Agriculture*: There has been reverse migration. People are returning from foreign countries and cities to their homeland, cities, towns and villages. Many of them have lost their jobs also and lives of the people of low income groups are miserable. Most of

them are concentrating on agriculture now and depending on local resources for their livelihood like tribal people.

6. *Immense Wealth of Joy*: In the wake of Corona pandemic, people are living with their family enjoying immense joy like tribal society. Many of them are working from home living with their family members. They are practising Yoga and meditation etc. maintaining calm and quiet way of life. The love, peace and tranquillity in the life of people are also providing joy to them like tribal people. This kind of joy was not possible in hustle and bustle of city life.
7. *Close Knit Society like Tribal People*: The whole world has become like a small village because of Corona pandemic crisis. People have forgotten their differences and discriminations. We are witnessing unity in diversity' during Covid-19 era. Instead of Physical meetings people prefer virtual meetings effectively and skilfully using the information and communication technology. All the countries of the world have joined hands to combat with Corona.

However, it is also said and witnessed that domestic violence is increasing due to confinement of people in their homes. Firstly, if we closely examine the matter, we will find that India is a male dominant society and there is no equal distribution of work. The male counterparts are generally not ready to perform domestic work and because of this, there has been domestic violence. The second reason is that male, female and children living together are finding difficult to adjust and feel boring as they are not exposed to outer world and their friends these days. Sometimes these reasons leads to domestic violence. Thirdly, there are people who are tired of sex and people forcing their spouses for frequent sexual acts that lead to domestic violence and quarrels between the couples. Fourthly, many of them are jobless and hence they are facing financial crunch that is also leading to violence. Fifthly, Children are not going to school and many of them, of course, are attending online classes but in some families, they are making lot of noises and voices hence they are leading to domestic violence. Sometimes, it is also felt that privacy of life is also lost as all the family members are present there all the time and this also leads to a kind of violence. Lastly, there are the people who are the wanderers but they have to live now within four walls hence to ameliorate their anguish, they are prone to commit domestic violence.

Thus, in the Era of Covid-19, people are away from hustle and bustle of citified life maintaining peace and tranquillity like tribal people and hence this is the source of immense joy and beauty of life. There has been an abrupt fall in pollution rates. The air has become clean and water is clear. There is a kind of ecological balance today. The birds are chirping and singing. There has been an abrupt fall in crime rates outside, however, it is said domestic violence has increased. There is a participation in social responsibility and people have stopped over exploitation of nature. In fact, the corona pandemic awakened all of us and we are always in alert mode to save our lives. In a nutshell, Covid-19 is as follows:

Ghar Gulzar, sune shahar, basti basti me kaid har hasti ho gai,  
 Aaj fir jindgi mahangi ho gai, Aur Daulat sasti ho gai.  
 The cities are paralysing in settlement and suburbs  
 Confined everywhere human being, the life has become costly again.

(Anonymous)

Thus, the life in the wake of Corona pandemic crisis has become costlier today. We are observing social and physical distancing, washing hands time and again with soaps, and using sanitizers in our hands, disposing of used up tissues immediately, covering mouth and nose with masks. We are also avoiding crowds and gatherings. We should not touch mouth, nose and eyes etc. frequently. We used to honour guest as per the dictum “Atithi Dev Bhav”, but now a days, we are not welcoming the guests in our homes. People prefer to work from home. Even our young students are hooked to internet with mobile and computers and attending online classes to avoid physical gathering. The very common symptoms of Corona virus are coughing, fever, flu, headache, sore throat, difficulty in breathing, lung infection, loss of taste, low white blood corpuscles etc.

## LITERATURE IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

Literature is a reflection and refraction of society. During era of Covid-19, there has been immense creativity in the realm of art and literature. New ideas, new forms, new norms, novel characters and episodes are being created now a days. People are using their time and energy, intellect and imagination in creation of art and literature. They have taken the challenges as to how the negativity of Corona era can be transformed into positivity. There is a religion to uplift of all human being in *Upnishads*.

Sarve Bhavantu sukhinah, sarve shantu niramayah  
 Sarve Bahrain pashyantu, Ma kaschid dukh bhag ghaved.  
 Let everyone be happy and healthy,  
 May we see welfare of all  
 Nobility of every human being  
 May there none be dominated by sorrows and sufferings.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gandhiji served as plague worriers. He writes his experience that “the indefatigable zeal and fearless with which the youths worked rejoiced me beyond measure.” Gandhi ji praised the bravery of doctors. He has dedicated full length two chapters relating to Black Plague in his Autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*. In *Bhagwat Gita*, Krishna enlightens Arjuna, *Indriyanam manb ch asmi, Bhutanam ashmi Chetna*.

He says; “Among the senses, I am the mind in all the beings particularly in the humans, I am consciousness.” Considering this sermon, we should make our mind strong and be enlightened with our consciousness. Further, he narrates “*Tejh Tejshwinam Aham*” “I am the energy of energetic.” If we imbibe such sublime thought; no negativity will emerge. Thus we need to enhance our immunity particularly during this point of time when the world is facing Corona pandemic crisis. There is a great thought in *Upnishad* “*Asto Ma Sadgamay, Tamso ma Jyotirgamaya, Mrityo ma Amritagamaya*”. The simple translation will be “Take me from Untruth to Truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. Let us try to immortalise ourselves with great and noble deeds.

In the present context of Covid-19 pandemic, we should not conceal the facts rather we have to accept the reality and truth. We need not put in darkness anyone and go ahead to lighten and enlighten ourselves. We should not move towards death or mortality rather we have to attain immortality in the sense of Covid-19 for which we have to be healthy and enhance our immunity power and longevity. The question arises as to how we can enhance our longevity. I pondered over the issue time and again especially during the course of my difficult time in Chennai and Pondicherry. I consulted literatures and interacted with knowledgeable people, sages and saints during Sept. 2019 to Dec.2019 particularly in Vivekanand House and Krishnamurthy Foundation in Chennai, and Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville in Pondicherry. The first and foremost thing is that we must keep our body and mind healthy for which we have to nourish them with good foodstuff, which we call balanced diet. Second; we must always be moving and the very movement and flow

is the energy of life that revitalises us. Third; we must love people and think and work in positive direction. Fourth; we should work for unfinished projects, which we long to accomplish in our lifetime and also try to finish them as early as possible before we take up the next venture. Fifth; one must use his physical and mental power fully and earn his bread properly. Sixth; “Regimen after the Meals: The following needs to be practiced soon after the meals: mouth gargling, chewing beetle leaf (pan) and walking about hundred yards. One should not lecture, travel by vehicles, carry loads, expose to the Sun and retire to bed immediately after meals.”(8:54) Seventh; one should release excreta (Vijatiya Tatva, Mal etc.) and maintain metabolism properly. He must maintain good health away from Vat, Pitta, Kaf etc. Eighth; we must maintain equilibrium of mind, psyche and body releasing excessive and harmful emotions for which art and literature, music and theatre are quite useful. Shanti and compassion of mind, psyche and body will be good for mental, psychological and physical health. Ninth; He must attain ‘Purusharth.’ (Artha, Dharma, Kam and Moksha). Tenth; “Observe a fast (Lamghana) once a week. Fasting is a detoxing process which is undertaken for practicing the “three R’s” regulating Agni, removing Ama and rebuilding Ojas. Whatever is capable of reducing the body is known as Lamghana or deducing therapy (Apartarpana). Fasting is one among the several types of Lamghana that brings about lightness in the body. Skipping supper once a week is recommended as it helps in excretion of the waste from the body and reduces belching and tiredness (caused without working); increases lightness; it improves one’s hunger, thirst, digestion, enthusiasm and psychology and cleans the sense organs.” (14:7). Eleventh; we can also meditate on the divine power and try to have dialogue with our own soul and the higher soul. In a way, we need to enter into the realm of spirituality. Twelfth; we need to think of some other constructive programmes, welfare measures, charity, donations etc. Thirteenth; one should try to spend his/her valuable time with children who are the embodiments of innocence. We should also interact with friends who can mirror our positive and negative things frankly on different matters. Fourteenth; one should also read and understand good literature (Sadsahitya) and also try to create something new; whether it is Art, Literature, Science, Technology etc. Fifteenth; one should perform regular Yoga and physical exercises. Lastly; besides these, if one is suffering from a particular disease, he has to take medicines properly. During corona



pandemic crisis; we need to take the things which can enhance our immunity as prescribed by Doctors, Aurvedacharya and physicians.

There is another dictum '*Vasudhaiv Kautumkam*' i.e. the whole world is a family is the great thought that springs from India. We believe that the entire world is our family and what our duty towards family is also an obligation towards humanity. In *Bhagwat Gita* Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna "*Yogab Karmesu Kausbalum*" so to control corona epidemic and pandemic with skills is a kind of yoga for which we must strive hard to enhance our immunity power. Covid-19 has affected our social relations, sometimes we neglect and contempt the infected person. We are prone to abandon the infected person and sometimes, we hate him. This happens for the welfare of family, village, city, nation, and ultimately for the entire world. This idea is harmful for not only an individual but also for the world rather we need to help and serve the needy and people who are suffering from various ailments.

The great saint poet Tulsidas in his *Ramcharitmanas* enshrines '*Karma Pradhan Vishwa kari rakha, Jo jas karahu to tas Fal Chakha.*' He has given utmost importance to one's duty (Karma). In the context of Covid-19, 'negligent becomes mortal, vigilant becomes survival and immortal.' The very important thing is the family as an institution. "If you perfect your family, it means you perfect the nation." Immunity power should be enhanced physically, mentally, morally, psychologically and spiritually. There should be unity in our words, belief and action, as Gandhi ji said. There should be unity in our nation and the world to face the challenges of today. There should not be fault-finding or tricky politics but we should imbibe reformative spirit having optimistic thought. I must quote P. B. Shelley's line here, which is an apt; "If winters comes, can Spring be far behind? Ramdhari Singh, national poet of India, was a poet of social revolution and he envisioned that the wealth of capitalist will be snatched by people soon and then there will be an egalitarian society. He aptly inscribes;

<i>Usi tarha ye not tumhare</i>	(Your sinful currency is likely to fly)
<i>Papi, ud jane wale hain</i>	(The labour is killed, and also the possessions)
<i>Tap bhi mara gaya, mal bhi</i>	(And receivers are the common citizens)
<i>Aur log pane wale hai.</i>	(Singh, 2005, rpt.2015, p.61)

Poonam Diwedi, the blooming poet of India rightly and beautifully utters the suffering and pain of corona pandemic in a pathetic mood in her poem entitled "Covid-19: The Pandemic 2020"

Mankind's hopes lay buried  
 Under the cruel feet of Corona virus,  
 Shattered, scattered unclaimed bodies  
 With wrapped human limbs lay cluttered  
 Only to shovelled in parallel lines  
 In the lap of mother Earth.

She ends her poem like Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover." At the same time, she presents the corona pandemic catastrophe like Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" highlighting the natural phenomena of the universe and shining human values as follows:

In the face Nature's famous frowning  
 In calamity's catastrophic deep cut in wound  
 Let us overcome the nightmare  
 With deep perseverance profound  
 Resurrect the picturesque towns  
 We built over centuries  
 With synergy newfound  
 Diving Sun, rising again  
 All losses dumped deep in sea  
 Human values shining to gain  
 Healing Hilarious laughter and No Pain  
 And no Pain!

(From her U tube, consulted on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2020)

Yet, there is another poem written in Hindi by me entitled "Korona Krandit Balak Ki Vedna," by N. D.R. Chandra, which is self-explanatory. The child is in midst of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Corona pandemic crisis and he knows writing for Internet. Everything, the loss of his parents comes before him like a cinema. He finds himself in a state of dilemma, which is very tragic. He is caught between fruitfulness and fruitlessness of life and amidst these, he is in continual search of peace, solidarity and wisdom (Bodhi) in the universe.

*Simat gai jindgi ghar ki char dinvari me,  
 Matri-pitri ki bhaya shunya hui aaj,  
 Karun korona krndan karte bilakhte yah balak  
 Gaganchumbi Mal aur chlti gadiya tham gai  
 Shringar aur vir ras badal gaye shant aur vibhats me  
 Bilakhti manva ki bhikh mangta ye balak  
 Jivan aur mrityu ke bich ye jita ye balak  
 Nirasha aasha ke beech tadafata ye balak  
 Prem aur pida ke beech thirketa ye balak  
 Nishchitata aur anishchitata ke beech jita balak  
 Prem aur vishad ka path sikhta he balak  
 Jivan-mrityu ke chalcitra dekhta ye balak  
 Jhankrit jeevan ki Ibarat internet par likhta ye balak*

*Asim aasman aur vasudha ke beech  
 Vartman aur Bhavishya ka diva sn̄na dekhta ye balak  
 Chanchal sarita aur Brhamand ki gatishilta dekhta ye balak  
 Jivan ki nirarthakata aur sarthakata ke beech,  
 Shanti, samrasta aur bodhi kbojta ye balak.*

So far as power of true literature is concerned that is vast which pervades the whole universe and beyond it. It dominates the unbridled and the cunning persons whose whimsical activities are solely responsible for sufferings and sorrows of humanity including numberless innocent and gentle people. Therefore; it must be the duty of every true intellectuals and literary personages to imbibe the real grievances of the society and enable to shoulder on true modest and the best heirs which govern in such a way that none would suffer bitterly with cruelty for no fault of one's as is seen in the present days of covid-19 pandemic. In a nutshell, a new social order, a new normal has emerged in the era of Covid-19 and challenge is survival of the fittest today. The social norms are redefined and redeemed to suit the present need and not greed. Today, we are much concerned to maintain ecological balance avoiding all kinds of over-exploitation of nature. To enhance our immune system, we are talking lot of herbal medicines and practicing yoga and meditation. Family is at the centre today and we are realising the value of charity, compassion and wisdom.

We are really witnessing the fragile nature of human life and I am reminded of medieval saint poet Kabirdas who also championed egalitarian kind of society. He said; "*Pani kera budbuda as manus ki jat, dekhat hi chip jayega jyo tara prabhat.*" Before one disappears from the scene, one needs to make a mark on the sand of time and if this mark validates the action of a person, which we call 'purusharth.' This action could be in any field. Literature is a record of time. It is tale of the people and their environment, their joy and happiness, sorrow and sufferings. Of course, the literature produced during the era of Corona-19 speaks the volumes of new forms, styles, themes and new norms. It has to assimilate the sorrows and sufferings, wailings and mourning of the loss of dear and near relatives and friends, the frontline workers and stranded labourers. It has to narrate the tale of seclusion, loneliness, at the same time, the story of meditation and yoga, joy of fitness and mental peace. It has to narrate the story of one and all, the time and history, environment and ecology, lack of job opportunities and economic recession, trauma and frustration, the world and universe of the time to caution

the succeeding generation as to how one should fight such a pandemic in future. Undoubtedly, the world is united to combat the invisible enemy at different fronts and we are quite optimistic that though the help of logistics like vaccine etc. and poetic paraphernalia, we are sure to win the battle in near future. Thus, the role of literature during the corona pandemic is to give comfort and ease. It has to have tranquilising and soothing effect, ‘calm and quiet all passion spent’ so that we can restructure our life to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe to my friends Mr. K.P. Yadav, Former Hindi Officer, All India Radio and Mr. R. L. Sahu, Former Office Superintendent, Post Master General, Raipur for their valuable suggestions in shaping this paper.

## CHAPTER 5

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# Literature Infuses Indomitable Spirit to Face the Challenges of Covid-19 Pandemic

*Baburam Swami*

### ABSTRACT

Pandemic diseases play prominent part perennially in this sphere and in the world of literature. The disastrous mortal disease Black Death spread across Europe in the years 1346-1353 due to black rats. Plague also spread by contaminated droplets from the cough of patients. Dr. Robert Kock announced the discovery of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis, the bacteria that cause TB, during 19<sup>th</sup> century. TB killed one out of every seven people. Pandemic Covid-19 has put the whole world into predicaments. The Covid-19 will certainly transform mind-set of societies, politics, economy and human values will finally depend on the interplay of power, greed benevolence, innovation, integrated sense of sincere society, social upliftment among human beings. Psychologists must serve sincerely and ultimately the spirit of collective – consciousness self-dependent, self-respect self-Reliant, self- sufficient, self-regard, self-reverence, self-relentless and self- service will determine the new world of new lifestyle. We know nature is playing prominent part for the betterment of humanity. Even today to increase our immunity we are using natural products. We are loving and caring nature. We are using black-pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, turmeric, amalki, mint, triphala, ashvghandha, giloy, Tulsi (basil) all these are given to us by nature. William Wordsworth was a worshipper of nature. He said, “One impulse from a vernal wood, may teach you more of man; of moral evil and good, than all the sages can.” Romantic poets’ teachings enable us to be strong, brave, bold and powerful enough to face Pandemic Covid-19. Technology plays a prominent role in problem solving. It is solving problems of society. The technology and spirit of digitalisation is serving uniquely.

*Keywords:* Mycobacterium, psychologist, collective-consciousness, impulse, Black Death, self-reliant, immunity, prominent, poems, literature

## INTRODUCTION

Pandemic diseases play prominent part perennially in this sphere and in the world of literature. We know very well that literature is the mirror of society. The disastrous mortal disease Black Death spread across Europe in the years 1346-1353 due to black rats. Plague also spread by contaminated droplets from the cough of patients. Dr. Robert Kock announced the discovery of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis, the bacteria that causes TB, during 19<sup>th</sup> century; TB killed one out of every seven people. Presently, we are watching on TV screen that plague is spreading in Russia through China like Covid-19. Pandemic Covid-19 has put the whole world into trouble. The Covid-19 will certainly transform the mind-set of societies, politics, economy; and human values will finally depend on the interplay of power, greed benevolence, innovation, integrated sense of sincere society, social upliftment among human beings, science industry, government and civil society have to play prominent roles progressively with collective consciousness among students, teachers, leaders, social workers, servants, ministers, social leaders and non-government organisations, civilian, media will all have to play sincerely significant role in forth-coming days. Psychologists must serve with sincerity and ultimately the spirit of collective consciousness self-dependent, self-respect self-Reliant, self-sufficient, self-regard, self-reverence, self-relentless and self-service will determine the new world of new lifestyle. The general objective of this paper is to strive, to seek, to find the significant role of some of the quotes of literature which can enable sincere, devoted, dedicated, dutiful, disciplined, aspiring, agile, enthusiastic persons to be happy even at the period of pandemic period of tensions, worries, fear, confusion, depression, disappointment, and isolation barriers bearing lockdown and even after being unlocked. It is to enable persons to be connected with one another to make it one and sublime India. It will infuse indomitable spirit among students, peer groups, colleagues and friends. The spirit of victorious teaching learning process, sustainable thinking, optimistic attitude, hardworking spirit will keep us going. The challenges of dark deserving dragon to dwell in devil's domain in the grave will be immense. This writing will enable such people to know that light is supreme power, the divine intelligence will diminish the dark and prove:

“*Asatoma sadgamaya, tamaso ma jyotirgamaya; mrityorma amritam gamaya.*”  
(Amritapuri)

(O Lord! Lead me from false to truth, darkness to light, Lead me from death to immortality.)

The Italian writer poet, correspondent and true humanist Giovanni Boccaccio returned to Florence in early 1341 avoiding the plague of 1340 in the City. In his book, *The Decameron* he told the tales of ten people of Florence who escaped from ‘Black Death.’ Recently we have seen in our nation working class people escaping from metro cities to the remote villages to meet their parents. Giovanni Boccaccio was a contemporary witness to the effects of the Black Death pandemic. The *Yersinia pestis* bacterial pandemic in Europe caused 75 million to 200 million deaths across the continent alone.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky incorporated Tuberculosis (consumption) into the plot of his 19<sup>th</sup> century novel, *Crime and Punishment* as a subtle literary tool. Tuberculosis (consumption) in the literature of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky time is disease caused by Tuberculosis (consumption). It is an airborne disease that can be transmitted from human to human by sneezing, coughing and even speaking. If left untreated Tuberculosis (consumption) infection can be fatal. What could be the reason for such diseases? This is the question which remains unanswered.

It is realised, analysed, evaluated and understood that overcrowding is often a major factor in facilitating the spread of diseases. Dirty living style is the most affected. Poverty often rules out the possibilities of quality healthcare. Disease does not discriminate when it finds an opportune time, it will infect regardless of social status, kings, queen, ministers, doctors, workers, or wealth.

Honourable Prime Minister of the nation perhaps anticipated the disease with his sixth sense or divine power and took innovative work of ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyan’ to protect poor patients and poverty-stricken patted person to be free from spread of bacterial diseases. His vision of enabling poor to get treatment by Ayushman Bharat the health insurance scheme with grants vision by providing the subscribers a medical expense cover of rupees up to five lakhs is exemplary.

The novelist Charles Dickens wrote of two losses in 1838 in his book *Dombi and Son* (1838). He stated about the dreaded disease

which was impossible to be cured. Presently, Covid-19 is an acute infectious respiratory disease. The pandemic diseases create tension among people and put them down to react. In such conditions young minds due to restrain, may take unwanted steps.

In such situations of problems and worries, John Milton in his classical book *Paradise Lost* infuses the indomitable spirit. During the times of distress the lines from his book was read, realised, understood and analysed even by Mahatma Gandhi (the Father of our Nation). He was inspired and motivated by Milton and gave a slogan, “Karo Ya Maro” (Do or die).

“Fallen Cherubs, to be weak is miserable,  
Doing or suffering” (Milton 9)

Milton wrote my dear fallen angels, to be weak is miserable doing or suffering. Covid-19 is troubling, torturing and putting us in disastrous conditions. People are dying but we must have the courage to face it with indomitable spirit within. Milton added,

“What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost the unconquerable will  
And courage never to submit or yield.” (Milton 8)

When all the fallen Angels were in burning lake in hell and plunged by God, the leader invoked,

“Awake, arise, or be forever fallen”

Almost the same slogan was sung by Swami Vivekananda inspired by a sloka of Katha Upanishad,

“Awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached” (Milton 14)

Now, our nation has received new possessor, who powerfully presented points to protect the people of the pure and perfect country of priests. He used innovative techniques of taali, (clapping) thaali, (plate) lighting of lamps and collective consciousness. He had designed diverse deeds to delete drastic disease but due to few foul and fake followers with pirated of personal comments have ignited dragon desire to diminish divine culture of mother India (Bharat Mata) and some satanic sources sought to spread some serious diseases for mental sickness of expansion. This reminds and associate literary persons to proclaim that Alexander pope in his poem ‘Essay in Criticism’ was right in saying,

“A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,  
Drink Deep or taste not the pierian spring.  
There shallow droughts intoxicate ate the brain



And drinking largely sobers us again.”

William Wordsworth imbibes human values (courage, devotion, dedication, mannerism, virtues, power and freedom) through his poem, ‘To Milton’ he wrote about Milton and invokes his soul to come to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He says,

“Oh! Raise us up, return to us again;  
And give us manners, virtues, freedom and power” (Wordsworth 363)

He invoked the seventeenth century soul to guide the nineteenth century persons. He wrote,

“Milton thou should’st be living at this hour,  
England hath need of thee...  
Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart  
Thou had a voice whose sound was like the sea,  
Pure as the naked Heaven majestic free.” (ibid)

We find Indian philosophy in his expression,

*“Deh tere insaan ki halat kya ho gai Bhagwan, kitna badal gaya insaan.”*

William Wordsworth’s teaching on love and worship of nature enable us to overcome the trauma of Covid-19. He says, “Nature is panacea of all health.” In the poem, ‘Tintern Abbey’ too he emphasised that,

“Nature is a teacher, whose wisdom we can learn,  
If we will and without which human life is in vain and incomplete”  
“The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul,  
Of all my moral being.” (Wordsworth 251)

We know nature plays a prominent role for the betterment of humanity. Education of man by nature, to increase our immunity is evident in the way we are using natural products. We are loved and cared by nature. We use black-pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, turmeric, amalki, mint, triphala, ashvghandha, giloy, Tulsi (basil) which are all gifts of nature. We are using these products to increase our immunity and face the covid-19. William Wordsworth’s interaction with the river Wye is expressed in the poem as,

“O Sylvan Wye! Thou wandered through the Woods”  
“How often has my spirit turned to thee” (Wordsworth 250)

Rabindranath Tagore in his book, *Gitanjali* (offering of songs) also teaches and infuses a powerful spirit stating,

“Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.  
This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again,  
And fillest it with fresh life” (Tagore 1)

Similarly the Holy book *Gita* too imbibes indomitable spirit in us and enable us to be away from fear of death.

*"Nainam chhindanti shashtrani, na cha einam dakti pavkah;  
Na cha einam kaledyanti, aapo na shosyati Marutah."* (Gita)

American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote about the immortality of soul and enabling the world to know that soul is immortal so do not worry be brave, bold and courageous enough to face the pandemic. It cannot be killed by anyone. He wrote,

"If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass and turn again." (Emerson)

William Wordsworth further added and expressed,

"And I have felt,  
A presence that disturbs me with joy  
Of elevated thoughts a sense sublime  
Of something for more deeply inter-fused.  
Therefore, am I still a lover  
A lover of meadows, and woods  
And mountains of all that we behold." (Wordsworth 251)

Presently, the world is deeply delved into the spirit of materialism. In the sonnet, 'The World is too much with Us' William Wordsworth criticized the world for being absorbed in materialism. He wrote,

"Getting and spending we lay waste our powers  
Little we see in nature that is ours  
we have given our heart how is sordid boon  
I would rather be a pagan suckled a creed outworn." (Wordsworth 388)

Further, Wordsworth added the indomitable spirit in his poem, 'Intimations of Immortality Ode.' He expressed,

"Our birth is but a sleep and forgetting;  
The soul that rises with us, our lives star  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
But trailing clouds of Glory do we come  
From God, who is our home  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy." (Wordsworth 222)

In this poem he also expressed his deep love for common people, poor farmers, peasants, labourers, he wrote,

"Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, its fears,  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give,  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." (Wordsworth 225)

He is talking about the exploited, poor common people. True love he found in huts where poor men live.

We are all well aware advertently or inadvertently that the pandemic Covid-19 and other diseases and climatic crisis are prophesied messages from the nature. It is well known that a belief in limitless growth, high consumption lifestyle and indifferent to nature and natural activities heads to anger, depression, addiction, dishonesty, greed, etc, which eventually leads to disturbed and destroyed natural surroundings and habitats of wild species, which has brought them close proximity to human beings and enable generations to face the challenges of this pandemic Covid-19.

Another great romantic poet, the gentle child of Adonis, John Keats lost his mother at the age of fourteen because of the spread of Tuberculosis (Consumption). He also lost his brother Tom John to Tuberculosis (Consumption) but before being endeared to nature being blessed, John Keats became immortal. He died in 1821 at the age of twenty-five years. Pandemic Spanish flu spread in twentieth century. The world is facing with courage and trying to prove Rabindranath Tagore's courageous child in the poem, 'The Child' he expressed,

“Victory to the man the new-born the ever living!”

Tuberculosis (Consumption) has influenced history and literature which was created by the greatest creator of art. Tuberculosis (Consumption) was known as Romantic Disease too. After this disease Pandemic Covid-19 the world will be facing a new and innovative world in the form of new set up. It played prominent part and recurring roles in diverse fields. John Keats was suffering from Tuberculosis (Consumption) he wrote about it in the poem, 'The Ode on a Grecian Urn.' In this poem John Keats overcame and accepted solitude like today's current train state. He expressed his thoughts very nicely and immortalised Fanny Browne. He said about Fanny Browne that her image can neither be found in temple, in church, in Arcady nor in mosque. He expressed his emotions as,

“What leaf Fringed legends haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals or both  
In temple or dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these?  
What struggle to escape?” (Swami 551)

John Keats further imagined and as if the songs of marriage are sung. He stated,

“Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter.”

Thus, we can say that John Keats has given a good message to the world that if one is sick do not infect others by spitting, coughing, sneezing, urinating and throwing excreta in neighbour houses. We have witnessed such activities done by some people during this Pandemic Covid-19 but John Keats with his pure, pious, purified, perfect, sincere, sublime and serene ideas expressed,

“Thy song nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Thou winning near the goal- yet do not grieve.” (ibid)

The Romantic poet, John Keats was conscious of his actions. In the same poem, ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ he propounded the theory of beauty in Indian style, “Satyam Shivam Sundaram.” He wrote,

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know”

In another poem, ‘Ode to the Nightingale’ he stated his sad and painful mood as,

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains,  
It is not through envy of thy happy lot  
But being too happy in thine happiness” (Roy, Chakraborty et al.79)

John Keats further adds in the same poem,

“Fade far away dissolved and quite forget  
What thou among leaves has never known...  
Who is here to listen each other’s groan –  
The wariness the fever and fret  
Here where men sit and hear each other groans  
Where youth goes pale and spectre thin and dies” (ibid)

But he is well aware about his status. He exclaims,

“Away! away for I will fly to thee on viewless wings of poesy.” (ibid)

We see even during disastrous days, John Keats had indomitable spirit and enabled people to be brave, bold and beautiful for the indelible actions through his creation.

John Keats further added,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy! (Roy, Chakraborty 180)

These literary lines empower, encourage, serve strength and shine sincere sublime souls to face the challenges of Pandemic Covid-19. The world is still witnessing a lot of deaths. What will happen? Will we die or survive? Keats said life is an illusion. He expressed,

“Was it a vision, or a waking dream  
Fled is that music – do I wake or sleep” (ibid)

Noble Laureate Rabindranath Tagore also enabled us to face the man-made problems through his poem, ‘Heaven of Freedom.’ The *poem* taken from the book, *Gitanjali* also infuses indomitable spirit and energised to escape into the world of ecstasy. He said –

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;...  
Into that Heaven of freedom, my father let my country awake”

(Tagore 20)

I am certain there will be a lot of problems of social strife, expansion, hunger, acceptability, bank balance, wealth, property oriented aggravating problems. People in many nations may suffer exacerbating poverty-oriented situations. We have seen migrated mazdoors moving from metro-cities mother’s mud-houses even before being marred by this mahamari Covid-19.

PB Shelley, another great romantic poet keeps on solacing us – the world sees how much is my pain yours pain are not as grave as is mine –

“*Duniya mein Kitna gam hai, Mera gam Kitna kam hai;  
Logo kaa gam dekha to, mein apna gam bhul gaya.*”

Shelley deeply expressed his sorrow to give us strength like the character of Mahabharat Pitamah Bhishma pains. He wrote,

“I fall upon the thorns of life I bleed! (Swami 565)

He further added to be sure that –

“If winter comes can spring be far behind” (Swami 566)

Shelley wrote wonderful things of optimism. He is very hopeful that hard times of suffering will also pass and we will enjoy the life. In his poem, ‘To a Skylark’ he added,

“We look before and after  
And pine for our sincerest laughter  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell us saddest thoughts.”

(*English Poetry* 67)

Alfred Lord Tennyson in his poem, ‘Ulysses’ infuses an indomitable spirit, which inspires us even today, to fight the challenges of Pandemic Covid-19. He guides and tells strongly to his friends that they must not be afraid of the challenges they face. Face it with strong will – power, with courage and overcome all hurdles. He explained with great will power,

“We are one equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.” (*English Poetry* 91)

Tennyson told his friends in the poem that they should not be afraid of the challenges. We must be united with one equal heroic temper he added that they be not afraid of death if they are united to one and sublime in power and strength. What we feel here is that we listen to our inner self and know our talent because a lot of strength lies in there. These lines empower, encourage and build our will power to face feasible problems created by Covid-19. We are of one equal temper of heart means one and sublime India, integrated nation full of togetherness, full of nationalism and attitude not weakened by fate and time. We are strong in our will power. We will work hard. We will do research work, innovative work. We will not bow down and will even sacrifice our life for the betterment of society. People do not have emotions now. Man has become a money-making machine and make merry with machine even being very near to the nature. People are not able to enjoy nature truly.

On the other side, Matthew Arnold tells us that people do not have emotions. He also adds that being very near to nature we are unable to enjoy nature. He asked his beloved in the poem ‘Dover Beach’ to come forth and enjoy the sea waves,

“The sea is calm tonight,  
The tide is full;  
The sea of faith was once too at the full and round Earth shore.”  
(*English Poetry* 107)

Even today we see due to covid-19 the relationship between friends, relatives, family members and colleagues is full of doubts. If husband, brother, father, mother, servant goes out for marketing or other purposes then out-goer is asked to take bath immediately. They are being asked to put clothes in washing machine and wash. Nowadays, true love is not there. Filial relationship in such situation is at stake. We are in a pathetic condition. Arnold wrote in his poem, ‘Dover Beach’,

Ah! love let us be true  
To one another! For the world which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, no love, no light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help or pain;  
And we are here on a darkling plain,  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.” (ibid)

In circles of political power expression of choice happen to be war on the virus while business likes to talk about post pandemic scenario in terms of bouncing back. In these utterances’ articulations and images, it might be possible for us to look for clues about a world that awaits us on the other side. We are watching daily on news channels about war, anticipated war between the countries or third world war. We are clashing with each other at home, in offices, in districts, in states and nations.

Robert Browning another great poet of the Victorian period wrote poems with unbridled optimism. He gives great, grand and gracious messages of glory to face such situations with serene sincerity and sublimity to make a unified and sublime world. He also felt that the great words come out from the great minds. He was optimistic about the existence of God and the notion of a perfect Heaven. Browning maintained a strong faith in conventional religious thinking and afterlife. In his poem, ‘Rabi Ben Ezra’ he celebrates both incarnate life and the life of spirit. He guides us and expresses as bird wings and sings – Let us cry,

“Grow old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the best was made:” (*Poetry Foundation*)

In the poem, ‘Pippa Passes’ he says-

“God is in His Heaven,  
“All’s right with the world!” (*Poetry Foundation*)

Here, we find that Robert Browning speaks out the strongest words of optimistic faith in his Victorian Age of scepticism and pessimism. No other poet is so completely, consciously, and magnificently a teacher of man as is Robert Browning whose poetry is intentionally charged with moral purposes. The poet universalises that failure is common to all human beings. He wrote-

“Fail I alone, in words and deeds?  
why, all men strive and who succeeds ?.” (*Poetry Archive*)

Thus, Browning holds positive approach to the present that may be worst if approached can prove a tonic for the tired minds. Perhaps some change can be reasonably anticipated as we all know that change is a law of nature.

One of the greatest modern poets, William Butler Yeats in his poem, ‘The Second Coming’ exclaims that,

“Falcon cannot hear the falconer,  
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned.” (*Poetry Foundation*)

This poem voices a sense of shock dismay and pessimism about the future that many felt after the war. The overall tone of the poem is one of foreboding, chaos and loneliness. Yeats is talking about human values. His idea is based on messianic prophecies. It is a symbol for lost the humanity, at the forces of uncontrollable forces. It is about short life-span of power and glory of human being and another aspect is the sheer vastness of mother nature. A dark future is foreshadowed by violence of the present. We are also realising, experiencing and witnessing similar vibes during this Pandemic Covid-19.

Another great modern poet, Thomas Stearns Eliot in his poem, ‘The Wasteland’ communicates from the perspective of those who have died, buried and in Hell viewing with regret heavenly springtime like the persons who did pay heed to the Pandemic Covid-19. In the beginning we saw many a man neglecting the spread of this disease. This was bought by some anti-nationalists. TS Eliot rightly wrote in this sense in his poem, ‘The Wasteland’,

“April is the cruellest month, breeding lilacs,  
 Out of dead land, mixing memory and desire,  
 Stirring dull roots with spring rain.”(Eliot 51)

Further, Eliot talks about “Datta, Dayadhavam, Damyata”. By stating so he means that ‘Datta (Give)’, ‘Dayadhavam (sympathise)’ ‘Damyata’ (control). The present scenario is also talking about the same spirit of ‘Datta (Give)’, to the poor by means of donating. Various projects under the Prime Minister Care Fund, Chief Minister Care Fund, ‘Dayadhavam (sympathise)’ with the victims who are suffering and dying and ‘Damyata’ (control) the anti-social elements or the people are spreading Corona Virus in various parts of the nation. Ultimately the consequence of such actions is Shantih (peace), Shantih, Shantih!

Possibly, we will say an alliance of common people push back against systems and practices that foster the destruction of ecosystem on one hand and give rise to unmanageable destruction on the other. The manageable disease could be cured immediately. On the other hand, clean river, pollution free neat and clean environment have left an impact on us. The impact is very positive. We are inquisitive of



which force will prevail and what could be the contours of a desirable alternative? Let us go back to literature for a manual and see what has been envisaged in the realm of imagination and literature. Is there a possibility that the disruptive and destructive effects of this pandemic Covid-19 will be so great that we might be prepared to embrace more human values oriented conscious lifestyle and radically new ways of running our affairs while addressing vested interest and greed?

William Wordsworth was right in saying, “little we see in nature that is ours.” Even before the immediate threat dies, there is some news to cheer by PB Shelley, “if winter comes can spring be far behind.” We are witnessing domestic violence, civil wars, thievery, loot, murdering, killing and assassination as a result of roti, kapda aur Makaan (bread, cloth and house) because of not only unemployment and equity but also due to corruption.

Technology plays a prominent part in problem solving. It is solving the problems of society. The technology and spirit of digitalisation is serving uniquely the purpose of conducting meetings, teaching learning processes, official work, banking, business etc. are being completed with the help of digitalisation. But during such Pandemic Covid-19 it is facing difficulties. Minor climate change-oriented problems could be solved easily. Outbreak of such disastrous disease is heart-breaking.

There is no certainty of when it will be materialised. The spirit of loving nature must be inculcated in one and all. The true cooperation between individual, streets, villagers, districts, states and Nations is must. But truth is something else. We will be wavering in between visions or boundaries worries, many closer to one or the other as the policy seemed and other variable change. When vaccines and techno-fixes are dearly desirable, we can expect an increasing and legitimate demand for a larger role of the state and Central Government. Though the Government’s role is undeniable and important without implementation of lockdown, situation could quickly spin out of control with serious social unrest in the backdrop of increasing death counts. The role of citizens as a moderating force in the tug of war between strong Government and poor people may become shattering to the true spirit of making, “Eik Bharat Shreshth Bharat.” It may become a hindrance to engage people powerfully to develop the indomitable spirit of patriotism and nationalism.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used for this research paper is descriptive and interactive methods. The main aim of research is to find out the truth which is hidden and which must have been discovered but not so well expressed. To portray accurately the characteristics of a particular individual, situation or a group is known as descriptive research studies. To find out the facts, I have interacted with some of the professors and students of my college.

## **PROBLEMS FACED BY PEOPLE DUE TO PANDEMIC COVID-19**

People are not interested in reading books and understand the importance of nature and human values. Pandemic Covid-19 has created an array of problems for people of all age groups. The children are not able to develop socially, physically and mentally due to staying at home all the time. The schools and colleges have been shut down so the environment of proper education is markedly disrupted. The age of the youth where their mind is always in search of adventure and job have to stay at home for fear of catching infection. The tourism industry has been markedly affected and the people who were associated with it are suffering from serious poverty. The old people are also affected by not being able to go for walk in the parks and other friendly gatherings. Humanity has been pushed towards fear of unknown. The human values like dedication, devotion, faith, sincerity and attachment among each other are eroding.

## **SOLUTION FOR PANDEMIC COVID-19**

The solution to overcome this disease is use nature products like ginger, black-pepper, aswagandha, triphala, basil leaves etc., be in the company of nature. Inhaling and exhaling along with physical exercise is a must. Involve in reading books based on nature. Literary books will develop strong willpower. Pandemic Covid-19 has created a state of chaos across the globe. The need of the hour is to overcome the chaos by creating balance and harmony in our day to day life. We must be very careful regarding the places we go, the persons we meet as well as keeping a distance of one meter or more or of 'Do Gaj Kid Deh Duri' from every individual we come across. We should not be casual with our friends, colleagues and relatives too. Most of the time use of body language to convey the messages

should be encouraged like saying ‘Namastey’ instead of ‘shaking hands’ and ‘hugging’. The use of water vaporiser gadgets should be encouraged in community to clear the congestion of face and mouth. The water vapours are formed at boiling point of water, when we inhale vapours the irritants in nose, eyes, mouth or throat are countered with it. The key to win over this pandemic Covid-19 is to strictly follow the WHO guidelines. Pandemic Covid 19 is the contagious, uninvited guest of human body that is a threat to our community.

## CONCLUSION

At last, I would like to conclude that challenge is getting the attention of health policy and medical communities who are working day and night to better understand Pandemic Covid-19. Now, we have a clearer understanding of what this needs to look like, the world is discussing and interacting about the efforts and results because of increasing contiguity of humans and animals some of which are basins of deadly viruses. We cannot reach to the conclusion that Pandemic Covid-19 is the last pandemic to attack humanity. We have discussed on some of the last pandemic that attacked humanity. Francis Bacon was right to say in sixteenth century, “Histories make men wise, poet witty, the mathematics subtle, natural philosophy moral grave logic and rhetoric able to contend” (Chakraborty 176). At last, I would like to conclude with William Wordsworth’s lines, “Nature is a teacher, whose wisdom we can learn if we will and without which human life is in vain and incomplete.”

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## CHAPTER 6

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# Pandemic, Epidemic and Literature: A Compendium

*Rashmi Jain*

### ABSTRACT

Nearly after every century there have been evidences of epidemics and pandemic across the globe and the devastating effect of these epidemics and pandemic has been reflected through Literature. The paper deals with the brief history of epidemic and pandemic across the globe and the role of literature acting as a blueprint to record not only the epidemic/pandemic but the heart rending plight of the people, their pain, struggle, alienation and hope for a better future. The aim of the paper is to explore the works of foreign as well as Indian writers who have discussed epidemic and pandemic through their works starting from William Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe, Albert Camus, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, Ahmed Ali etc. Shakespeare has grown under the shadow of Bubonic Plague and the effect is quite visible through his works like *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear* etc. *The Plague* by Camus explores the dullness and fear created by Bubonic Plague caused by rat fleas, the complete lockdown scenario and reference to quarantine. *Rebati* by Fokir Mohan Senapati deals with outbreak of Cholera whereas Ahmed Ali in his *Twilight in Delhi* brought out the traumatic conditions and stressful ambiance of the nation during 1918 caused by Spanish Flu. However it is noteworthy that epidemics and pandemics also created a constructive impact apart from the destructive. It gave people an opportunity of introspection, maintain the ecological balance and create new literature.

*Keywords:* Epidemic, Pandemic, Plague, isolate, Covid-19, Influenza, Cholera, quarantined, Black Death, social separation

Literature is often considered as the mirror of society which reflects the societal activities and the phenomena of life related to it. Writers over the centuries have explored and reflected epidemic and pandemic in prose and verse not just exposing the devastating effect but also the resilience of human mind confronting it. It is strange but probably after every hundred year the world has undergone a severe

pandemic or epidemic that has changed the course of history with terrible consequences leading to death of number of people and collapsing of social, political, economic structure. Humankind has been affected by various epidemics and pandemics starting from Antonine Plague (165-180 A.D) then Justinian Plague in the sixth century (541-543 A.D) which took the life of around fifty million people. Another deadly epidemic was the Bubonic Plague (1346-1353) popularly known as The Black Death which killed around two hundred million people. Then the Spanish Flu emerged in 1918 and continued till 1920, this nearly killed around two hundred million people. Another epidemic that has been mentioned in history is Asian Flu. The changing environment due to human interference had led to outbreak of diseases like Zika infection and now in the 21st century Covid-19 has broken the backbone of humankind across the globe. WHO indicated “pandemic includes the overall spread of another illness while an epidemic stays restricted to one city locale or nation, a pandemic spreads past national fringes and potentially around the world.” (Muan 47) Several writers have exhibited epidemic or pandemic through the work of literature right from European literature to Indian literature. Writers like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe, Mary Shelley, Albert Camus, Stephen King, Edgar Allan Poe, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, Ahmed Ali, Premchand, Fakir Mohan Senapati and many more brought out the plight of people and the nation during pandemic and epidemic.

The reference to plague was first mentioned in the Bible. It was believed that plague was inflicted by God upon human beings as a kind of punishment. The word plague has its origin in Latin word which means wound. Shakespeare has spent a major portion of his life under the shadow of bubonic plague. Theatres were closed in 1606 because of epidemic and in quarantine period Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*. There were several outbreak of plague from 1582 to 1608. Shakespeare lost his near and dear ones because of plague. He lost his sisters Joan, Margaret and Anne when they were children, his brother Edmund as a young man and his son Hamlet at the age of 11. Shakespeare referred to plague in many of his plays like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet* etc. It has been mentioned that there was “severe outbreak of plague in 1582, 1592-93, 1603-04, 1606 and 1608-09” (Greenblatt, “What Shakespeare Actually Wrote About the Plague”). Plague has not been directly referred as an actual event in plays of Shakespeare apart from *Romeo and Juliet*. Friar

Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* has asked to deliver a crucial message to exiled Romeo in Mantua but the messengers were suspected of contracting some disease and were quarantined. Friar Laurence questions who took his letter to Romeo? He receives an answer that it could not be sent because of lack of availability of messenger. People are so fearful of the infection caused by Plague that everything came to standstill. Therefore the news that Juliet is not dead but only sleeping could not reach to Romeo and this unfortunate turn of circumstances led to the suicide of both Romeo and Juliet. In *King Lear*, the King describes plague that hang in this pendulous air referring to air borne transmission of disease. King Lear even curses Gonreil by saying a “plague sore, carbuncle in my / corrupted blood” i.e. reference to enlarged nodes which is one of the major symptom of bubonic plague. The expression of isolation and separation also first emerged during the time of plague i.e. infected people were kept away from uninfected population.

Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year* depicts the experiences of a citizen from London during the year 1665. It is the year in which the city was struck by the great bubonic plague. The heart rending and devastating condition of the times has been portrayed. People suffered from violent fevers, vomiting, insufferable headaches, swellings etc. because of Plague. As the cases increased the Mayor issued several orders like banning public events and gatherings, schools, theatres etc. were closed. Infected person was quarantined at home and was restrained to leave the home along with their family members for the general welfare of the public. It was ordered that anyone who violates the order would be given punishment of death. The journal is a kind of blueprint written to make future generations aware about the atrocious condition of London during 1665 and help them if confronted with the dire circumstances in future. It’s strikingly strange that during the Covid-19 Pandemic situation, a similar kind of strategy has been in practice worldwide.

Defoe’s text is technically a novel but historians and epidemiologists have praised it as an accurate report of life in London during the Great Plague...In *A Journal*, a middle-aged narrator renders a graphic and comprehensive look at life inside a city beset with a pandemic far more terrifying than the one we face today.

(Grover, “What Can Daniel Defoe’s Plague Year Teach Us About Coronavirus?”)

Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Masque of the Red Death* (1842) exposed the failure of authorities to deal with an epidemic. The Red Death causes people to bleed to death through their pores; in response Prince Prospero locks himself along with the thousand privileged courtiers into a lonely but luxurious castle and hosts a masked ball. The idea was that the outside world could take care of itself while those privileged could afford not to be bothered, since the prince has provided all means of entertainment. Finally red death enters as a human guest and claims the life of the Prince then of his courtiers.

*The Plague* (1947) by Albert Camus deals with the epidemic of bubonic plague in Oran – a coastal town in North Africa. The grim beginning of and dull ambiance of the play sets the tone of impending tragedy. Here unnoticed the population starts to die in the streets. The collection of dead rats became the cause of the spread of epidemic. Dr. Bernard Rieux seems apprehensive about the incident from the beginning but the death of M. Michel, confidante of Rieux and series of death in the town makes it apparent that they are facing epidemic. The situation was such that the doctors have nothing to guarantee and the local press and news had nothing to talk about apart from rats:

For rats die in the street; men in their homes. And newspapers are concerned only with the street...So long as each individual doctor had come across only two or three cases no one had thought of taking action. But it was merely a matter of adding up the figures and once this had been done the total was startling. In a very few days the number of cases had risen by leaps and bounds and it became evident to all observers of the strange malady that a real epidemic had set in. (Camus 33)

There was increase in death toll, people were quarantined at home, and burials supervised. The town was sealed, gates were shut. Travelling was prohibited and mail services were suspended. This social separation has drastically affected the life of the people and their daily routine. Dullness, depression and isolation prevailed in the town. The situation depicted by Camus during the plague are very similar to the Covid-19 situation where there was complete lockdown, travelling was prohibited, social distancing was advised to be maintained, gatherings – groupings were to be avoided.

Stephen King wrote *The Stand* which is an apocalyptic novel published in 1978. The plot centers on a pandemic of Influenza. It exposed that a bio weapon within a secret US Department of

Defence laboratory was accidentally released which affected and killed approximately 99.4 percent of world's population that too within a month. Stuart Redman was one amongst those handful brave survivors in the play.

Apart from the European literature, there have been references of epidemic in Indian literature as well. Suryakant Tripathi Nirala's memoir *A Life Misspent* captures the time of Spanish Flu that affected India in 1918. Indian soldiers who participated in the World War I as a part of British army when they returned home, carried the disease along with them in fact they became the carriers of this flu. This pandemic took lives of almost around ten to twenty million people.

*Rebati* (1898) by Fakir Mohan Senapati, a well-known Oriya writer exhibited the havoc created by Cholera epidemic. Revati is a titular protagonist, a young girl who wants to study therefore her father arranges for a tutor named Basu. Soon with the outbreak of Cholera the village also gets affected and tragedy after tragedy takes place. Rebati loses her parents due to cholera and starts living with her grandmother. Rebati gradually becomes dependent on Basu. Gradually Basu too becomes victim of this disease and finally Rebati too dies because of Cholera.

Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* poignantly reflects at the account of plight of people in Delhi caused by 1918 Spanish Flu, even nature seemed to be angry with the people of Hindustan. Ahmed Ali in his *Twilight in Delhi* exposed the tragic, painful and the stressful account of the people and the nation during 1918. The story exposes the harsh reality as there has been increase in the death rate; even the grave diggers raised their fees fourfold times during pandemic.

The summer of 1918 was more terrible than the summers of the previous years... It howled through the empty streets and in the narrow by – lanes and bazars... Hundred houses of Indians had been killed in the war... Nature wanted to demonstrate her own callousness and might. Broke out in epidemic form and from the houses in the Mohalla all around, heart rending cries of lamentation and weeping began to rend the air. (Ali 229)

There was hardly any house where people have not lost their near and dear ones. Shams even lost his wife. Inhumanity of people, greed and lust for money even when death was at the corner has been portrayed by Ahmed Ali in *Twilight in Delhi*. Whether it was the grave-diggers or the cloth merchants' or the ghassals all were busy making money out of someone's helplessness. The grave-diggers increased their fees fourfold time i.e. from two rupees to eight but then also



they complained and grumbled. They were hardly bothered whether the grave was properly dug or deep enough or not. People stood in queue to get their relative buried. In case someone protested they would leave the work and say ‘dig it yourself then’. They can’t do better than this. There was death and devastation everywhere; it became the city of dead. The atrocious circumstance has been delineated by Ahmed Ali. As the graveyard became full, the diggers doesn’t have an option but to dig the graves that has been recently possessed but when someone recognises the grave, they would protest and say there must be some mistake and threaten them “are you going to bury your dead here or not? We have so many waiting still...” (Ali 231) the cost of linen cloth which is used as winding sheet has been increased therefore it became difficult for people to provide decent burial. Ghassals who performed the rites of giving bath to dead started to charge more. The condition became pathetic.

How deadly this fever is,  
 Everyone is dying of it.  
 Man become lame with it  
 And go out in dolis.  
 The hospitals are gay and bright,  
 But sorry is men’s plight. (Ali 232)

The epidemic and pandemic have a long history and literature has helped to portray the reality of those time, exhibited the crisis, pathetic condition of the people and the affected nation. It must be mentioned that epidemic and pandemic are destructive and disastrous on one hand but it has a constructive side as well. It provides and gives an opportunity for introspection, to develop a thought process, to rekindle and produce a masterpiece of art and people are coming up with quarantine musings and other forms of creative writing. During the present scenario the countries across the world are being affected by deadly Covid-19 virus which has taken innumerable lives but many people in quarantine are formulating and compiling their ideas and thoughts into a work of literature.

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## CHAPTER 7

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# Lessons from Pandemic Literature and COVID-19

*Richa Verma*

### ABSTRACT

Pandemics are pervasive medical phenomenon that evokes fear and fury due to their spread and reach and in the process they create a transformational impact on human life in that era. The invisible and insidious infectious agents and ensuing diseases have anchored compelling narratives, as a part of literary traditions, to describe human misery, diabolical devastation, and an ultimate triumph of the spirit. This chapter traces the portrayal of pandemic through the early literature and walks through classic literature, including contributions from India. Notably, there has been clear effort in writings to bring out the misery caused by the pandemic and how it severely affects lives and livelihoods. Death and devastation exposes us to the dark side of contagions, while victorious medical practitioners and convalescing patients offer a glimmer of hope, positivity and reconciliation despite obvious differences in the social fabric of the society. Classic and contemporary writings not only provide an insight into a humanity in turmoil, but it also allows a fair portrait of our losses, grief, despair, and our efforts to move forward, and create new ways to celebrate life.

*Keywords:* Pandemic, literature, poetry, writings, imagery, coronavirus, human spirit

### INTRODUCTION

Lethal infectious diseases have long been a part of literary traditions comprising of compelling narratives of misery, unbroken spirit and ultimate triumph. Pandemic-themed literary works have forced us to examine human compassion, individual vulnerabilities, and societal behavior against the backdrop of contagions. These uncertain times have lives cut short, broken promises, and heightened anxieties, amid rise in greed, corruption and loss of ethical concerns. Many literary works have also presented how the pandemics could dehumanise

consciousness, lead to fragmented societies and political instability. These works of fiction allow us a peak into suffering, sustenance, and spiritual redemption, while the world worries about rebuilding of social fabric and enduring structures.

## **PORTRAYAL OF PANDEMIC IN EARLY CLASSIC LITERATURE**

Mary Beard, the Cambridge classicist and a scholar of Ancient Roman civilisation, identifies that the first surviving work of the Western literature, Homer's *Iliad*, commences with a plague sent by Apollo to avenge taking away of Chryseis as a war trophy by Agamemnon, a king of Mycenae (Beard). Daniel R Blickman has suggested that "the evidence of diction, then, gives some indication that the plague is an opening image for the poem as a whole." (Blickman 1)

Centuries later after the *Iliad*, plague-like pandemic was again at the core of the classic – Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. It was described that the plague pervaded through Athens, devouring a large number of inhabitants before disappearing on its own volition. Thucydides' account of the plague is indeed dramatic: It was agreed that of all years, this one was particularly free from sickness of every other kind. And if anyone was ill with anything else, it was all resolved into this. Others, from no discernible cause, suddenly in the midst of health, were seized by, first, powerful fevers of the head, and reddening of the eyes and inflammation.

Notably, Thucydides' vivid description of the plague is also considered by many as an outstanding piece of scientific observation. Thucydides emphasised that nothing could stop the advancing pandemic, which eventually left Athens and its citizens in a state of great turmoil. Thucydides' portrayal of a city-state under siege of a pandemic is very poignant, while attempting to instruct the future generations about the miseries caused by the pandemic through the impressions of observational narration (Parry 106).

Another chilling literary account of a pandemic is presented by Daniel Defoe in his book *A Journal of the Plague Year*, published in 1722 – almost 50 years after the real plague that hit London in 1655. The city saw the death of 100,000 inhabitants followed by the misery of the people. Defoe's work details how "the face of London now indeed strangely altered" (Defoe, 2010). He reconstructed historical writings to compose a dramatic narration of the plague with images

of infected families and communities in quarantine: It was generally in such houses that we heard the most dismal shrieks and outcries of the poor people, terrified and even frightened to death by the sight of the condition of their dearest relations, and by the terror of being imprisoned as they were. The literary signature in the work makes us visualise the pestilence and its effect on human suffering titled as “tragedy of the poor.” It not only brings the context of medical theory in understanding of human actions in light of the pandemic, but also provides an absorbing account of forced seclusion, unstable emotional space, and its impact on Londoners.

Defoe continued to present the fury of the plague by informing “that the infection was propagated insensibly, and by such persons as were not visibly infected, who neither knew whom they infected or who they were infected by.” These lines bear eerie resemblance to the scourge of COVID-19 and its aftermath. There also was a tone of optimism from the fall-out of the plague when Defoe remarked that “another plague year would reconcile all these differences; a close conversing with death, or with diseases that threaten death, would scum off the gall from our tempers, remove the animosities among us, and bring us to see with differing eyes than those which we looked on things with before.” (Peraldo 167)

It is moving to note how Defoe muses on the calamity caused by the pandemic and its profound effect on the lives, livelihoods, and economic outcomes in a city afflicted by the scourge. However, it is admirable how a glimmer of positivity was observed, during the plague, in the form of reconciliation brought by the people having different religious orientations: a close conversing with death, or with diseases that threaten death, would scum off the gall from our tempers, remove the animosities among us and bring us to see with differing eyes than those which we looked on things before. It appears that there was some positive message from the plague after all it brought traces of benevolence, sense of succour and aid to the needy.

## **PORTRAYAL OF PANDEMIC IN CLASSIC LITERATURE**

*The Plague* by Albert Camus addresses a recurring theme of epidemic in a long tradition of literary writings. In this leitmotif of contemporary literary writing, this novel presents human suffering in the large Algerian city of Oran where a strange fever afflicts the population. Akin to what we have seen in the COVID-19 situation,

city authorities of Oran implement strict sanitation measures and order the whole city under quarantine, which overwhelms the inhabitants. They eventually overcome personal distress and longing and realise that the plague is a part of collective suffering. They come to recognise the plague as a calamity that should concern everyone and it should be addressed by collective social responsibility. The narrator, Dr. Bernard Rieux, who provided palliative care to the citizens of Oran, states that “The whole thing is not about heroism.... It may seem a ridiculous idea, but the only way to fight the plague is with decency.” (Camus 1991)

Such prophetic words in *The Plague* resonate with the current health crisis of COVID-19 where in addition to a myriad of grave health concerns, one needs to extend a healing touch, gratitude for health professionals, and to offer deep admiration for the indomitable human spirit (Franco-Paredes 899). In essence, this novel evokes similarity with COVID-19 pandemic – a plague-like health disaster – that engulfed the humanity on a global scale.

“Plagues are like imponderable dangers that surprise people,” Gabriel García Márquez, a Colombian Nobel prize awardee novelist, short-story writer, screenwriter, and journalist, remarked to the *New York Times* in 1988. They seem to have a quality of destiny. García Márquez suffered cholera and recurring incidents of malaria during his lifetime. It gave him a sense of resilience from pain and disaster which in turn, evoked a conscious warmth and intimacy towards mankind. In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, one of the many masterpieces created by Márquez, he wrote that “persistence (and handwashing!) were rewarded with love after a life of living with countless cholera outbreaks” (Soriano 321). Florentino Ariza, the male protagonist of this iconic novel, while waiting for a response to his love letter to Fermina Daza, was described having “his anguish was complicated by diarrhea and green vomit, he became disoriented and suffered from sudden fainting spells, and his mother was terrified because his condition did not resemble the turmoil of love so much as the devastation of cholera.” (García Márquez, 1988)

Curiously, an old homeopathic practitioner after studying the condition of Florentino Ariza was able to “conclude once again that the symptoms of love were the same as those of cholera.” Márquez penned this iconic story drawing parallels between cholera and love, and the flowing imagery of the two runs through the book with the

description of disease and an acute love sickness, with the symptoms mirroring those of cholera.

A literary work by the Portuguese Nobel laureate José Saramago, describes an inexplicable epidemic of white blindness that spreads swiftly through a city leading to utter chaos amidst citizens and society. The unexpected onset of blindness leads to panic compromising the social structure, while repressive measures were implemented to keep the contagion under check by quarantining contaminated individuals in an asylum. The unabated growth of the blindness epidemic and inability of the state to control it was followed by a devastating fire, which necessitates freedom of blind prisoners. This work is a vivid portrayal of desire to survive, political mayhem, collapse of social fabric and at the end, feeling of happiness as the blind tend to regain their eyesight.

Zatta and Braut have used this novel to compare it with SARS-CoV-2 pandemic with similarities in the contagiousness of diseases, their spread and lethal nature and the possibility of cure (Zatta, 2020).

Marchalik and Petrov also compared health and socioeconomic devastation by COVID-19 pandemic with the suffering described in the fictional account of José Saramago's *Blindness*. Notably, the paradox of blindness portrayed in the novel lead to a philosophical reflection that "I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see." (Marchalik, 2020, 1899). Similar to the paradox of blindness epidemic, Marchalik and Petrov have elaborated how COVID-19 pandemic which has also exposed prescient issues such as health inequalities, injustice in resource distribution, social security set-up, and access to affordable health-care. Similarly in recent times a pertinent attempt to restore, rehabilitate and cure various after-effects of COVID 19 as witnessed through black fungus, clots and cardiac arrests in patients and in a way some futile yet persistent effort to save lives by our health workers.

## LESSONS FROM PANDEMIC LITERATURE

The literature of pandemic is a sought after genre as the humanity has been besieged with pandemics on a recurring basis. Literal imagery has tried to paint trepidation, dread, anguish, despondency and demise, as the various shades of pestilence and pandemic. Pandemic literature is not built around the pestilence, its cause and

the aftermath, but it also reflects our failure to identify an invisible pathogen and a commensurate response also seen for the COVID-19 disaster. Analogous to the classic pandemic literature, the world silently watched as a barely living entity of COVID-19 virus ravaged the humanity without disdain. These narratives offer us a link to the past that was threatened to be annihilated by the pandemic.

Similar to the pandemic literature, COVID-19 also presented a new infectious agent, the unpredictability of infection, the random manifestation of symptomatic and asymptomatic illness, which caught the entire modern world unaware and unprepared. A barely living organism shook our belief that we control the nature. In reality, the disdain of COVID-19 did not ask for a metaphor or an allegory before ravaging the world in an unabated manner.

It remains to be seen how the coronavirus epidemic will transform the use of language, societies, and linguistics. Given a more social and connected world, this pandemic will inevitably lead to a new genre of literary writing and alternate sociolinguistics structures as an escape to share emotions, ennui and longing during the long days of isolation and quarantine. It is also abundantly clear that the spread of a pathogenic entity leading to catastrophic circumstances on the global scale will bring a sense of cooperation among communities, require innovations by the civil society, and dissemination of knowledge for the common good among fellow human beings. At the end, we can take solace in the Persian adage “*This too shall pass*” reflecting on the ephemeral nature of every single despair or happiness that comes our way.

## LESSONS FROM PANDEMIC LITERATURE FROM INDIA

It is clear that epidemics are fertile sources for new ideas for intense writing and is able to connect across continents. It is fascinating to learn that early Indian literature used and justified the definition of the term “pandemic.” For example, Kauṭilya has enumerated “eight great calamities of a divine origin” in the chapter titled Upaniṭāpapratiṅkāra (Arthaśāstra 4.3). He also elaborated on possible counter-measures to reduce the impact of the pandemic. Similar connotations of “an epidemic, plague, mortality” are also found in Suśruta’s works and in Varāhamihira’s treatise titled *Brāhatsaṃhitā*.

Notably, several Indian literary giants such as Rabindranath Tagore, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Premchand and Nirala have also



written poems, stories and novels in a number of Indian languages about the devastation brought by the pandemics. Specifically, Tagore ushered deep social and philosophical insight to some of his literary works perhaps through his experience of witnessing the plague of 1898 and the global pandemic of Spanish Flu in 1919. In addition, there were numerous encounters with the epidemics such as cholera, smallpox, and influenza, which would have had an influence on his literary creations through sombre spiritual contemplation. He always celebrated the spirit of human survival and service to the needs. For example, *Chaturanga* is based in the times of plague-scourged Calcutta, in which Saachish's compassionate uncle converts his home into an infirmary for the poor, but while nursing the patients, succumbs to the disease.

In her collection of poems on coronavirus pandemic, Anuradha Bhattacharyya evokes mysterious imagery of the virus which unleashed the fear of death and calamity, while creating an indelible impression on the psyche of the human race (Bhattacharyya, 2021). The world came kneeling to the invisible enemy and it was able to create an imaginable fear out of nothing. While questioning the genesis of this microbe, her poetry illustrates the set of unspoken questions about the creation of the virus, its spread to the farthest ends of this planet and the misery it brought to the mighty and the weak, the rich and the poor, transcending geographical boundaries of nations and continents. In light of this deadly pandemic, the poetess questions if our fear might be a fear out of nothing when she writes:

It is possible  
To demonstrate How  
A person  
Is driven crazy  
With the fear  
Of nothing.

She vividly expresses her fear of the invisible (nothing) and perhaps directs us to the fact that such an object could bring the societies and countries to a halt. The verbal ingenuity of her pandemic poetry unravels deep symbolism in easy-to-read-and-follow verses that allows readers to understand the gravity of situation, inner ennui during seclusion and lockdowns, and an unforgiving atmosphere of social distancing for everyone. Admirably, some of her verses also emphasise on our collective will to overcome the grief and enhance survival instincts through resilience and composure.

Pandemic literature is a tough subject to write as our thoughts vacillate between despair and hope, helplessness and thriving, grief and joy, and hopelessness and optimism. Yet, as Maya Angelou wrote in *Still I Rise* (Angelou, 1978):

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
 I rise  
 Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
 I rise  
 Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
 I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
 I rise  
 I rise  
 I rise.

Looking through the crystal ball, it is abundantly clear that as we slowly try to move out of the insidious shadow of the virus, try to recover, heal and gain confidence to tackle the scourge, we will take time to ponder on our losses, reconnect with the humanity, make justified choices as we move forward, and create new ways to live, love and laugh. The indomitable human spirit and peaceful coexistence with nature will become ever more special and crucial as we heal from the nightmare of the pandemic.

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## CHAPTER 8

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# Surviving the Pandemic: Saving the Future! Literary Approach

*Alka Dutt*

### ABSTRACT

Development of society rests upon development of everyone. Children are the future of this world. Well-being of children is way forth to a healthy society. Pandemic has been a traumatic experience for all; the young have shown their strength and perseverance in these tough times. They have withstood great loss in many aspects due to closure of schools, colleges, coaching centers and other major learning institutions for such a long duration. Families have come together to put all fears at bay for these youngsters; in turn these young minds have been pillars of support to elders who have suffered loss at financial front. Online teaching has been a boon to all levels of society. Activities taken up by teaching institutions have succeeded in accomplishing more than just saving an academic year of a child. This proposed paper discusses different aspects of how technology has helped in saving many a child from becoming victim of depression. Pandemics have always been part of human life. Examples from literary history can certify this and government records testify them. Need of the hour is to make the youth aware of how these difficult times in the past have been overcome with resistance put up by man. Wheel of time never stops; we talk about the 'New Normal', but this will again go on to become the 'Normal', as it did in the past. This paper does touch upon sufferance of the masses, but like every storm that passes, it would like to stress upon the fact that hope should always be kept alive for a better tomorrow. Following pages would bring forth much more about what has made life bearable than just technical support to society during these harsh times. Emotions, relationships, attitudes, stubbornness, religion and will to survive through all odds plus much more is what makes life precious; and this is what is expressed through words. Covid-19 has left bitter, bittersweet, and important messages for years to come. It has also been source of bringing man back to 'life once more'. Covid-19 has acted as harbinger of new life; paper discusses this important 'Restoration of society' act of Covid-19. Negatives and positives go hand in hand; this is the bitter side of aftermath of any Pandemic. This has been taken up as an important opponent whom the individual must fight against in present and

future times. Storms are withstood with great strength, strength gets depleted; paper would like to stress upon survival strategies of worn and torn emotions of man as seen through the eyes of many a great example from the past.

*Keywords:* Pandemic, Traumatic, Online teaching, technology, New Normal

## **SURVIVING THE PANDEMIC: SAVING THE FUTURE!**

Ongoing pandemic has shaken today's world as nothing has ever done so before in these current times. Man, who always talked big and dreamt big, is now facing a problem that is out of his control. Human beings in power, who had started considering themselves invincible against any danger, and were trying to proclaim themselves as Gods of this earth, are now forced down on their knees to acknowledge the supreme power, the omnipresent creator of this universe. Nature has taught a lesson to these so called 'Gods' by denying them entry to houses of worship as all places of worship had to be closed down as was demand of crucial time. Christmas celebrations that bring joy to every heart had to be curtailed due to new strain for Covid-19 that seems to have come up in the wake of Corona Virus. But sadly, history of pandemics shows that God never dictates, and man never prostrates for long.

## **LITERARY VIEW OF EPIDEMICS**

Both literary and non-literary texts discuss natural calamities that had befallen man from time to time. Official records give a glimpse into causalities but these numbers are often subject to questioning as ruling powers try to undermine seriousness of the matter. Undermining seriousness can be due to different reasons, and one needs to have a clear perspective of all that goes around societies of this world. At onset of pandemic news from China made one wonder as to whether one is living in a civilised world or barbaric times. News channels and social media showed horrific state of men and women being dragged out of their homes as they were suspected of having contracted the disease. Shoot at first appearance of Covid symptom orders were also passed in another country and it made one feel lucky to have been born in a country like India. There have been examples of cats and dogs being put to death during The Great Plague of London (1665) for being suspected of spreading the bubonic plague. And early days of Covid-19 remind one of these gruesome and heinous acts. When Prime Minister of India made all light up lamps and beat drums to drive off the Covid demon, one felt as if

humanitarian values were perhaps still alive. To survive, positive attitude is a must when all seems negative.

First pandemic during 6<sup>th</sup> C was precursor to scenes of burial sites of all following pandemics where “those who were making these trenches, no longer able to keep up with the number of dying .... tearing off the roofs, threw the bodies in there in complete disorder.” A friar seems to have remarked that pandemics are means of controlling population growth; “Contagion is the effect of divine providence, for the good governance of the universe.” Religions always come with their own explanations as far as cause and effect of these disastrous events are concerned. Man, more often attributes these calamities to “act of god” and never sits down to examine the role he plays in it.

Narrative Mosaic of Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, rightly sums up social scene during Corona times. Boccaccio wrote his work following Black Death that struck Europe way back in 1347-51. Characters in his work pass their time by telling stories during quarantine. Many households are passing through same phase as experienced during 14<sup>th</sup> C. Like all ages, this age also saw different viewpoints coming up regarding epidemic. While medical faculty from Paris laid the blame on God’s door by saying it was due to conjunction of three planets, non-believers took it to be a physical punishment and Muslims took it as “martyrdom and mercy” that secured a place for sufferers in paradise. Practical people went in search of preventive measures. They looked for cure to this epidemic that was caused by fleas. Mass graves are evidence to destructive feature of this epidemic. Resurgence of epidemic too is mentioned by researchers. Air travel has been banned from time to time to stop spread of corona virus from one country to another; Black Death virus too seemed to travel from one place to another, but via sea route. This deadly epidemic had its roots in China and parts of Asia. Kipchak Khan Janibeg tried to capture present day Crimean Port, Kaffa. It was at this time that the plague struck and destroyed his men. He tried to infect the enemy by throwing infested corpses amidst them. It was from here that ships moving westwards carried with them this life destroying epidemic to Spain, France, Germany, and other countries. Black Death stayed around European countries for years. It struck masses not once but many times. Death struck commoners, Archbishops, a royal bride, Petrarch’s poetic inspiration Laura and families en masse. Like all tragedies, this epidemic was also

able to subdue war loving people for a while. Here too one can trace economic crunch. Land lay barren as many tillers of land had lost their lives. Society was psychologically affected. Poets and other artists were preoccupied with matters of death and afterlife. Blame game found its way and Jews were persecuted in large numbers for bringing Black Death. Black Death died its own death as it was too deadly for its own self and had carried out its successful task of killing in large numbers which in turn made it extinct.

Literature reflects upon the nature of life. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* too talks about epidemics as calamities that strike humanity from time to time as acts of lord and rats, wild animals, snakes, evil spirits become medium of bringing this punishment for erring humanity. Many blame non-vegetarians to have unnecessarily killed mute animals to satisfy their taste buds as reason behind breaking out of this Pandemic. When nature rejoiced during early days of present pandemic, when sea creatures could be seen sunbathing on beaches of Goa, when birds chirped more freely, when wild animals came out on concrete roads, man found it fit to make cartoons about his own race that was quarantined behind bars to escape certain death.

Christopher Columbus is accused of 'Columbian Exchange' (1492) that brought death by Smallpox to large number of Americans. Columbian Exchange was concoction of smallpox, plague caused by rats, and measles. Smallpox made men infertile. Blindness was another threat posed by this epidemic that did not have any cure during early times. Aztec Empire faced destruction in 1520 due to outbreak of smallpox as it weakened man physically and paved way for Spanish colonisation. Research reveals that climatic conditions around the region underwent great change during this time. Farmers were unable to grow crops on land that had already been tilled because this meant more absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> from air which in turn caused cooling effect.

History of pandemics discusses Cholera as sea borne pandemic that had its origin in Hong Kong. From Hong Kong it travelled down to Bombay and other cities. More than 11 million Indians lost their lives due to Cholera. First Cholera Pandemic that spread via feces and germ laden drinking water and eatables is supposed to have been brought to India by British soldiers in 1817. British navy has been accused of spreading it to countries like Spain Japan, Italy, Indonesia, and China. 1855 again saw China, Hong Kong and India fighting of third plague pandemic. Indians died in large numbers, almost 20

million fell prey to influenza in 1918-20. This clearly goes on to show that India has been regular host to number of epidemics. And medical aid has been put aside many times in favor of witches, sorcerers, and local deities like Hurdoul Lala cholera deity in Calcutta in 1817. Indian society tackles pandemics in its own peculiar manner. Just few days back auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti saw many taking the holy dip in sacred Ganga River at Har Ki Pauri, Haridwar. There were faces covered with masks, but masks seemed to be there in name only as nose and mouth area was uncovered; fear had been replaced by belief that holy waters would sweep away Corona germs in the gushing waters. This only lends strength to saying that where there is a will, there is a way. Certainly, hope is alive that Corona will be driven away, and normality will reign supreme once again. To foreigners Indians seem to be a quaint community who worship God with Mushak for his vehicle. Lord Ganesha's rat seems to have warned Indians innumerable times about approach of plague. Mughal Emperor Jahangir talked about incident narrated by Asaf Khan's daughter. The story simply goes on to prove that rats are the first to feel symptoms of plague before falling prey to it. *The Plague* (1947) by Albert Camus talks about rats dying in great numbers in Oran and Dr. Bernard Rieux concludes that town has been infected with plague. This is a warning signal for men to vacate that habitat as it would soon be ravaged by the deadly disease. History of plagues in India can be traced through writings of notable regional writers. Munshi Premchand talks about epidemics in his stories like *Idgah* (1933), Phanishwar Nath Renu discusses Cholera in *Pahalwan Ki Dholak* (1944), Master Bhagwan Das talks about plague and psychosis in his *Plage ki Chudail* (1902). Hellish quarantine shelters have been vividly described by Rajinder Singh Bedi in *Quarantine* (1940). Literature highlights what goes on in society. Many healthcare workers lost their lives while in service to Corona patients. These Corona warriors are faceless to public. And it has always been the case. If it had been Salman Khan out serving people, media would have been buzzing with his minute-to-minute activity and would have showered accolades on him. But Bedi points out vividly that Corona warriors are only there to serve and fade away unsung.

Fiji Measles Pandemic (1875) was result of Royal visit to the place. Tribal leaders and police had gone to welcome royal visitors who were already infected. This led to spread of measles among



commoners. To control its spread, villages showing symptoms were burnt down.

Be it 1889 Russian Flu, 1918 Spanish Flu, 1957 Asian Flu, 1981 HIV/ AIDS or 2003 SARS; pandemics have always brought destruction of man in large numbers. Sexually transmitted diseases brought with them fear, and it made man draw back from his wrong deeds, albeit for some time at least.

Human distress can be measured from writings of writers like Daniel Defoe. Daniel came out with *A Journal of the Plague* in 1722. Bubonic Plague had struck London in 1665. Defoe, a mere five-year-old child at the time of plague, reconstructed the event for his readers. This book was supposed to warn people about plague that seemed to be approaching the city once more, this time from across the border, from Marseilles. Defoe tried to guide his countrymen on how to deal with this new threat. As a good journalist, Defoe knew where to look for authentic records for his narrative. He collected them from various places. Apart from mortality bills, he got his information from people who had survived the plague and narrated the horror encountered to their near and dear ones. Samuel Pepys diary confirms what Defoe says about the plague-ridden city. This epidemic was mentioned by Thomas Vincent in his *Gods Terrible voice in the City (1665)*. Vincent had fought for life of stricken people by working selflessly and diligently while Ministers of state fled the city in order to escape infection. This pattern can be found in present times too where the rich are escaping to their private farmhouses or to their holiday homes. Defoe talks about crowded city life with its unhealthy living conditions. Rats thrived around the place where people took plague to be just a 'Phoney War'. The book in some places takes up narration as if the author is trying to narrate a horror story. Here one can co-relate experience of young Defoe to that of a modern child who is unaware of reality of a pandemic but is afraid that if her nanny would die because of it, then who would be there to feed her as mother never had time for the child due to her busy lifestyle. World of Defoe's story is populated with stories like: "mothers murdering their own children in their lunacy, some dying of mere grief as a passion...others frightened into idiotism...." Bubonic plague struck restoration society of London at a time when wars were pushed back into the past and people were flocking into the city to enjoy life to its fullest. Luxury and good lifestyle was what

was uppermost in all minds. Modern lifestyle was no different when Pandemic shattered complacency of man all around the world.

Just as new strain of Covid-19 is coming up in wake of pandemic of past few months; it was the great fire of London that struck the city in 1666. Thomas Vincent justifies ways of God in passing judgment on Man's actions by saying: "It was the ungodliness of London, which brought the Plague and fire upon London. There was a general Plague upon the heart ... before there was sent a Plague upon the body; there was fire of divers lusts which was enkindled ... before the fire was kindled in the City." (*God's Terrible Voice in the City*, 1667) Just as Thomas talks about plague and fire as disasters that come up with interdependency, Nathaniel Hodges goes on to suggest the same in his work, *Loimologia: or an Historical Account of the Plague in London in 1665*. London's grim state is to be found in Defoe's, Vincent's and Nathaniel's works. While Vincent talks about disasters in biblical sense; Defoe is silent on fire issue and seems to emphasise more on state of London society that would not have been able to face two disasters at the same time even though a possibility existed as he goes on to express: "Indeed considering the Deliriums, which the Agony threw People into, and how I have mention's in their Madness, when they were alone, they did many desperate Things; it was very strange there were no more Disasters of that kind."

Man gets affected psychologically. "The Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allan Poe is one such story about a psychological character, Prince Prospero, who tries to escape pestilence rampant in the outside world by taking refuge in an abbey on premises of his castle. Poe's work comes up with different themes. Here death's inevitability is stressed upon despite all measures taken by human bodies as death stalks in silently "like a thief in the night." Like Vincent, Poe too hints out at anger of lord that strikes the Prince and his followers as they have no sympathy for men dying of epidemic outside the castle. Coronavirus patients seem to be committing suicide around the world. In Sangli, Maharashtra, suicide was committed by a patient by slitting his own throat. Another patient jumped out of ICU window at Government Medical College and Hospital, Aurangabad.

## TECHNOLOGY AND PANDEMIC

But all is not lost as present times offer 'Positive Technology' to spread suicide prevention and mental health helpline numbers among

the masses. Organisations around the world have set up services for aiding mentally disturbed patients. There are insurmountable hurdles in providing proper aid in this manner as history of one patient is often different from another; but one cannot say technology has failed altogether. IT sector has been a boon with its gift of drones to society where delivery of food packages, transportation of test kits, fast delivery of medicines in areas under quarantine and spraying of disinfectant is concerned. Robotic research has been promoted due to use of robots for cleaning infected areas. Health-conscious society has come up with health fitness apps to cope up with pandemic while staying indoors. Workouts are much easier to perform in isolated households. Contactless online grocery marketing has kept pandemic at bay from masses. Home entertainment provided by Amazon, Netflix, Voot Select and Hotstar etc. has kept quarantined people from falling prey to depression. Virtual Online education has no doubt kept youth in fit state. Intellectuals have been inspired to enlighten people about innumerable topics through online webinars, seminars, FDPs and conferences. Normal lifestyle has been possible with technology. Man has been guided at every step to help survive lockdown period. To some, Corona has been a boon. Students have been promoted without painstaking activity of taking exams. A 51-year-old student seemed to have cleared his 10<sup>th</sup> grade exam not because he passed it, but because directive was given to pass all students. Social networks did their own work of bringing humanity together during this tough period. People have been uploading innumerable videos, not to showcase their talent, but to help people pass quarantine period in a comfortable manner. Fear of death has given birth to love for life; life that has been ebbing away in rat race for earning money to live luxuriously, has slowed down to be enjoyed to the fullest. Families suddenly have lot of free time to get to know each other in real sense.

If one were to take Vincent's book into consideration, then judgment of God is awaited when technology is used to promote self-interest of individuals. Workers in Pandemic times are supposed to be at beck and call of their employers because communication is easier these days. On one hand where work from home has helped in keeping families safe within their home shelters; demented minds like to show off that they are young and healthy and cannot be touched by any virus by unnecessarily forcing others to move out of their shelters to cater to their whims at workplace. Their attitude is clear

when they say, "...let us see, only the fittest will survive." Where are humanitarian values in this statement? Such attitude gives rise to anxiety, abnormal fear of losing job, panic and hysteria among the needy. When someone laughs upon mental fears of patients, when one ostracizes someone because of his infection, when social boycott of family takes place due to a covid patient amidst them, this results in emotional exhaustion, irritability, depression, insomnia, and other emotional disturbances. Modern medical equipment, hospital facilities plus much more brought forth by social works contributed to curb this deadly disease; but still all has not been well with society. Recovered patients are in constant fear for their own health as well as health of those who meet them.

Pandemic literature gives directives to avoid infection. These books are great source of knowledge when one is looking out for ways and means to escape getting infected. If on one hand God is passing his judgment on Man by sending fire, on the other hand this same fire is also being used by infected people to get well. Defoe talks about physicians using fire to get rid of infected eruptions by burning the infected portion of the skin. Another measure taken up by campaigns against Pandemic was burning of clothes and bed sheets etc. of deceased person. This curtailed its transmission. London Magistrates took caution in allowing people to use fire to escape getting infected. They ordered for fires to be lit up all over the place only when it was considered as the last resort; this was done on September 2. Here Defoe emphasises how fire stood as strong wall between spread of disease among people as things burnt in the fire gave out sweet odours that come from strong spices and other compositions that helped in killing germs. Covid-19 strain can be fought off by constantly washing hands with a soap bar.

## **DEATH FORETOLD**

Shelley Walia rightly called pandemic literature as "Chronicles of death foretold." Death is on rampage of this planet. Horrific pictures from Hart Island of New York show insignificance of human beings. Place which was earlier meant as burial ground for unidentified bodies or for poor who could not afford proper last rites, today is a grim scene of bodies being dumped in trenches. Holy scriptures were written by learned men. When too much wrong is done in collective manner, it results in great epidemics, pandemics, floods, disasters, and other tragedies. Nature has been exploited in many ways.

Exploitation of good men is forever going on. Cultural values are meant to stabilise and generate peace for all; these values have vanished from even a country like India. Today there is lots of fan following and God is relegated to a place meant for showpieces in a living room. When strong bonds are severed from what makes man perform good Karma, then pandemic should not be a surprise for anybody. A housewife removes kitchen waste because it stinks; garbage man collects waste from different places to dump it in municipal garbage dump. When germs are not allowed to harm man's physical body, then why allow bad karma to collect and harm future of this world? Humanity needs to think on these lines. Propagating importance of shlokas in Geeta is not the need of the society; need of hour is to practice what lord preached in Lord's Song. Reports reveal that secular state is a myth. Blame game, making scapegoats of men is a never-ending torture that humans continue to suffer under human hands. Islamic group in Delhi, Tablighi Jamaat, was charged with negligence for spreading Corona. But was it right to make an ordinary Muslim citizen suffer for that? An ex-army officer was almost robbed off his life by village people just because he was a Muslim. A pregnant Muslim woman was denied medical aid when in need. A Muslim family was stopped from taking drinking water from community tap. Why? They were to be shunned as they were threat that would spread virus among Non-Muslims. Bible talks about ten plagues that were brought by God to Egyptian land as Israelite slaves were being refused to live freely even after being promised freedom. These plagues were those of blood, of boils, of hail, of locusts, of darkness, of lice, of livestock pestilence, of frogs and of firstborn's murder. Through these plagues God wanted to set up example of punishment for those who moved away from path of goodness. Pandemic literature is looked upon as an inspiration for those who would come up with their personal tragic experiences during these times. Camus says, "All a man could in the conflict between plague and life was knowledge memories." Literature fights for right to healthcare that is taken as a privilege by many.

### **TRAUMA IN EVERYDAY LIFE**

Restrictions imposed by authorities though well meant, have become cause of boredom accompanied by loneliness during past few months. Healthcare workers are gradually taking things in their stride as days pass by. First euphoria of helping all is slowly ebbing away in

the general sense. People who found solace in work are now again resigned to suffer trauma of constant nagging at home. Hopeless situation of such people pressurises them to do away with their lives. Economy of world is in a great mess. Lower most strata are finding it difficult to survive without means of earning daily bread. The most affected are the youth. Aspiring young minds are finding life stifling. Fresh graduates are in a quandary about what to do after graduation as technical and other higher training institutes stay shut. Job seekers are unable to procure jobs as businesses are going downhill. Thousands of workers have lost their jobs during pandemic times. This again goes on to show how little care do money minded people have for their hardworking employees. Retained employees are supposed to work doubly hard to compensate for loss of helping hands. Head of the house is not able to support his family; this in turn leads suffering of all. One cannot say countries like India are fully capable of handling such a situation as there is vast disparity in socio-economic scene. Early days of Pandemic saw government directing all companies to retain workers with salary cuts. But things changed fast for the worst.

### **MEMORIES FROM HARD TIMES**

Corona continues to terrorise man. For how long, nobody knows. But like end of all bad things, this too will pass, and mixed memories will be carried forward for posterity. One cannot justify deaths that have occurred or explain anger of god. Albert Camus says that God just watches with folded arms. Plague is all around man as man continues to do wrong by waging wars, by creating terror, by spying, by spreading diseases through bio-warfare plus much more. He suffers and repents for a moment before moving ahead with renewed energy.

Governments and people around the world have been trying to curb down pollution. Corona has lent its helping hand. Polluted rivers seem to have found new bounce in their waves since advent of pandemic. Sea creatures have been able to breathe sigh of relief. Man's interference with nature has been taken care of. People are not able to go out for fishing or boat rides. Holy places without pilgrims can certainly boast of sanitation measures being carried out.

Life moves on in steady stream with changing hues. What is abnormal today will again be normal tomorrow. New Normal is perhaps the interim period, the masked period.

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## CHAPTER 9

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# Musicians in Pandemic India

*Maitri Verma*

### ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has affected all industries worldwide, shattering the global economy. India and the music industry of India are no exception. Indian music industry, especially the performing-art industry has been severely dented by the pandemic as well as the other entertainment industries. Musicians in India however, are seen striving and making the best out of the situation. Among musicians, several classes are significantly marginalised, who suffer the greatest loss due to the global crises. This paper would try to analyse the basic patterns of adaptations by the different classes of musicians in India, in response to the pandemic. It would particularly focus on the artists who earn their livelihood solely from music. Live performers, sound and light technicians hired for stage performances, sound crew, run crew, makeup artists, offstage musicians and backup singers, scenic crew including painters, costume artists, stage managers, etc. seem to have been more adversely impacted by the Covid than artistes like songwriters, scratch artists, vocalists and online music producers. 'Small label' musicians are on the verge of ending their lives in lack of a satiating source of living. The virtual shift is profound too; for tech-savvy and passionate musicians the circumstances have not been as rough as for the others who are dependent solely on physical platforms like live shows, gigs or concerts in and around multiplexes, pubs, restaurants and marriage halls. Like other economic sectors, this industry also, witnessed a considerable proportion of layoffs in 2020. This paper would deal with the ways in which musicians in India have managed to survive through the uncalled blows of the decade and also suggest ways to cope with it.

*Keywords:* music industry, low paid artists, layoffs, covid-19, pandemic, musicians in India, increasing suicides, adaptive measures

### INTRODUCTION

The corona virus that was first recognised in Wuhan, China, has become a worldwide pandemic in the blink of an eye. It was in December 2019, when the initial cases of this virus were identified.



In India, the first case of the virus was reported towards the end of January, 2020 (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India). Since then, India has become the country with the largest number of confirmed Covid cases in Asia. Several lockdowns followed in various states and cities since then, but the pandemic crisis intensified. The lockdowns affected job sectors and small and middle businesses too. Bollywood music industry on any other usual day, floods with wannabe musicians, actors, singers, dancers, voice artists and so on. To procure a position in this industry has never been an easy task, and the pandemic has further elated the livelihood risks of such aspiring and freelance artists. This explains why many artists offer either free or low paid services for the skills they possess and the kind of work they do. We often come across singers with a guitar hung across their shoulder, performing in streets, bars and restaurants. In most cases, they are not well paid and yet, that very activity remains their fundamental means of survival.

Art has a charm that lurks youngsters towards earning a name in various creative fields. Unfortunately, we know only a handful of the million aspiring artists. Among others, some are still able to earn out of their respective art interests, while the rest are struck out of that possibility too. Behind the faces of leading singers, we hardly care to know about the people who work so hard in order to make a performance successful— the major part of a live performance occurs behind the scenes, both before and during a performance. There are stage crew, dress crew, sound crew, backup singers, makeup artists, sound engineers and many other small and unpopular professionals that make a performance. This is the usual paraphernalia around concerts. The dark pandemic times have enhanced the hardships of people in such professions. In fact, most gig artists who perform in small gatherings usually in bars, pubs, restaurants, hotels and marriages were forced to lose their jobs due to national and local lockdowns. Besides the younger generations who still have some backup, or are tech smart and can rely on other means of earning from their skills, there are a large number of middle-aged musicians, most of who are not technologically comfortable and might be used only to the traditional means of earnings. This paper would look into the few aforementioned compartments of musicians in India and discuss the adaptive strategies, drawbacks and necessary suggestions in their dealing with the pandemic crises.

## GENERAL STATE OF MIND

There is a general atmosphere of disappointment, anxiety, disillusionment and fear in the world. The pandemic is almost one year old now and people are facing a lot of mental and psychological pressure because of losing their friends, families and people they knew. Unemployment adds to their misery, while each person is already terrified by the unchecked threats of the virus. The collateral damage is even scarier. ‘The social and economic fissures exposed by the pandemic will result in mass unemployment, depleted social safety nets, starvation, increase in gender-based violence, homelessness, alcoholism, loan defaults and millions slipping into poverty. This post-Covid landscape will be a fertile breeding ground for an increase in chronic stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol dependence, and self-harm’ (Moses). Already, ‘Lack of awareness and limited opportunities discourage students to make music a full-time profession’ (Kour). Ripped off the limited opportunities, the middle class and marginalised musicians in India are likely to be in despair.

On psychological lines, simply put, music is supposed to render peace. When it is followed positively as passion, it serves the peace purpose well, while the moment it is transcribed into a dry profession, the peace turns into chaos and frustration. When the right kind of passion is lost, the hope and pacifying power of music is diminished. Every struggling artist who attempts at making a profession out of some art undergoes this stage. Academically speaking, the first stage is the “harmonious passion” stage, while the second is of the “obsessive passion.” While the former helps in building a holistic human being, the latter reserves some grave obstacles in the way of becoming one – ‘Passion may be one of the most important psychological drives that make musicians thrive, not only in their performance levels, but also in terms of their general well-being’ (Bonnevill-Roussy). Obsessive passion controls the mental states of musicians and thus, if music fails them in career, anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, and other negative emotions follow. Considering the case, in pandemic, it is quite understandable why there are increasing cases of psychological breakdown around the world of art in particular.

## LIVELIHOOD AT STAKE

In decreasing music events due to lockdown, most musicians were left unemployed after a few months since the lockdown, when all

their accumulated capital was depleted. Thus, even the basic amenities like paying room rent, paying school fees of their kids or even making available a two-time diet were denied. “I have very little rent...so I asked my landlord to reduce the rent to half the usual, but my plea was denied...I literally became jobless” (Covid-19: With Livelihoods At Stake, Live Musicians Seek Help) says a young musician named Nilanjan Samodder whose only source of livelihood is musical shows. Many small and big brands of musicians have complained that their shows in India as well as abroad got cancelled primarily because of the pandemic, making them suffer heavy losses both financially and mentally. “I had three shows (college-shows) mostly in Kolkata this month that got postponed, or rather say canned because we are unsure of when the conditions would achieve normalcy...” says another young singer Aditi Paul who supports her home by musical shows. Most other musicians have realised that their last show/ concert was around the month of March 2020, and since then they had to sit jobless at their homes. The landlords or schools or any public service providers aren’t helping them cope with the situation. After all, everyone is facing a similar problem dealing with the pandemic’s economic crises, and hence is trying to keep himself first.

### **INCREASING NUMBER OF SUICIDES AMONG ARTISTES**

For a country with the highest number of poor and malnourished, and individuals with depression and anxiety, this is the perfect storm...India reported 1,34,516 suicides in 2018...The World Health Organisation (WHO) pegged 2016 suicides at 215,872, with a suicide rate of 16.5 suicides, against the global suicide rate of 10.... (Moses)

Historically and stereotypically speaking, artists are prone to suicides more than other people – ‘A logistic regression analysis of data from 21 states finds that artists have a 270% higher risk of suicide than non-artists’(Stack). This is because artists are capable of feeling all emotions more than normal people. Every emotion, good or bad is heightened in them. They feel love, jealousy, happiness, grief, melancholy, ecstasy, etc. very strongly. Thus, when situations as grim as the pandemic surround them, they feel pain and sadness to the extreme, which gets complicated by the daily despairing financial struggles.

“The image that the word artiste elicits, especially in the minds of the privileged sections of society, is that of individuals from the middle class or the rich. Artistes and artisans from marginalised

sections are clubbed together as the ‘poor’ and rarely is respect or dignity given to them’ (Lal). These musicians are the low paid daily wage earners of the vast Indian music industry. As the country observed lockdowns in a row, these people exhausted their savings that hardly survived them up to two or three months of unemployment. Hence, the migrants had to leave the big cities they had made home in, for their livelihood, and return to their native places unemployed. The middle-aged artistes with children to feed and educate could hardly fight the lashes of layoffs. In addition, the usual artist psychology, which yearns for respect, is reluctant to beg or seek monetary help. This irony leads to the further doom of musicians in India.

It was a suicide attempt by a middle-aged harmonium player Suhas Das (name changed) in Howrah late last month that sent shock waves in the performing artistes community across India. There was no food at his home and no resource to get any. In a conversation with Kolkata-based sarod player Tejendra Narayan Majumdar, the musician somehow managed to mention how he was depressed since the lockdown began. There was no work, no stipend and the savings were already gone. Then there was the matter of dignity. (Khurana)

Indian music is traditionally linked to respect and that is why we see musicians living in poverty and yet performing for free or low money. Respect is usually attached with an artist’s persona, but respect does not alone earn him a livelihood, does it? Gone are the days when the monarchs used to take care of musicians and their families and art was really respected. Capitalism has captured all art industries alike; every form of art has been materialised. Times have changed and the traditional notions about music and musicians have flipped. Still, while many are earning satisfactorily, others strive to survive in this industry. Bollywood cannot support the huge mass of aspiring musicians and therefore, live performances play a crucial role in the life of low paid, temporary or freelancing artistes in the field of music. Considering these facts, it might not be unobvious that in lack of a constant source of income, the number of suicide cases in this industry has hiked during the pandemic.

## **INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE FOR INDIAN MUSICIANS**

There is this category of the social media musicians, who have been able to somehow crack the virtual platforms and have risen as stars. Indian engineer turned music producer, composer and social media

personality Yashraj Mukhate is one among the musicians to gain sudden professional popularity over social media. An important thing to understand about such musicians is that they engage in social media business strategies and marketing. They promote videos featuring their skills and talents. They handle technology and virtual spaces efficiently. In addition, producers like Mukhate are making music from home during pandemic. They are not dependent on public spaces to do their jobs and thus the pandemic hardly seems to have affected them. For them, in fact, the pandemic rather seems to have proved as a boon for their artistic growth. Having more than a million followers, they also earn from virtual platforms like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. They come live, engage with their fans and entertain them. In return, they are paid in money and popularity.

In lack of any real sources of income, the tech friendly musicians have turned to social media trying hard at making a fan base for themselves. Some have succeeded in the venture while some have not. But, Indian audiences seem to be supporting low and high profile musicians equally, bearing with their experiments in all tits and bits. Indian audiences seem to be more than welcoming regards to the ongoing experiments in music. Mukhate's viral video made from a tik tok piece ("Kya karun itni sunder hun toh") and a dialogue from an Indian Hindi TV serial ("rasodey mein kaun tha") proves the point. His subsequent dialogue turned musical tunes like the 'Biggini Shoot...two pieces only', Shehnaz Gill's 'tuadda kutta Tommy', etc. suggest the same. *Jugaad* music is in vogue during the pandemic. People also make use of simple mobile phone cameras and low budget lights to make videos. These clips are not very high quality in resolution and yet the Instagrammers and You Tubers are earning from them, mountaineering followers.

On the brighter side, we have the impact of the musical shows and series aired on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, etc. A recent series called *Bandish Bandits*, advocating classical Indian music caught fire as soon as it was released. This series not only received huge public attention but also influenced young aiming musicians of the country. The show is an eye-opener for the subscribers of Indian classical music traditions that are often held in high regards. It exposes the evils of traditional music training culture on one hand and on the other seems to encourage the rich and historic musical traditions of India. Nevertheless, the audience apparently fell instantly and madly in love with the semi-classical and classical songs

featured in the show. A revival of Hindustani classical music is thus impacted by shows like this, inspiring huge young musicians in India and across.

### **COPING METHODS ADOPTED**

- *Collaboration:* Many musicians have adopted collaborative methods for new song and cover releases. However, collaborations demand a home set up of the required recording entities. Some musicians do afford it, while some might not. The video of Prateek Kuhad's recent original "Kasoor" was made by collaging a number of short selfies videos shot and sent by his fans. The huge popularity of the song proved wrong the notion that in order to go trending on social-media, superb video quality is a mandatory. The song sung in Indie style, although simple in composition, attracted a huge fan base.
- *Tutoring:* Tutoring is another important skill to what the laid off musicians have switched. This includes teaching guitars, piano, ukulele, violin, etc. as well as giving vocal training to children and adults in schools as well as in private via internet connectivity. While not all great musicians need to be great teachers, this activity is also fully benefiting only a few. In addition, not all of the musical skills could be taught over web conferencing, as they particularly require a tête-à-tête teaching platform.
- *Web concert:* Hosting virtual concerts is a relief to moderately fed musicians, while these do not seem to help the rest. An interesting web concert initiative was taken by Zoya Akhtar and Karan Zoya to raise money for the pandemic affected people. The project was called *I for India* concert where various prominent personalities came together for virtual performances live-streamed through Facebook. However, in this regard, Sameera Iyengar in an interview says:

I think there will be an embracing of the digital space in a way that has not happened before. But I am not sure this will be a *move* to the digital space – for me, "move" implies leaving one space for another and I don't think that is going to happen...Theatre is entirely reliant on the coming together of theatre practitioners and audiences for a collective, shared experience. (Iyengar)

The positive aspect amidst such chaos is that the attention has shifted from Bollywood to independent artists. “Because of the lockdown, the Bollywood music and movies were not releasing and that gave us the leverage...” says a Mumbai based rap artist Palak Parnoor Kaur also known as Lil Malai (Malai). With a large audience support, musicians who are trying to do something innovative in terms of style and content of music in India are making their names in the grim scenario as well. The audience’s taste seems to be encouraging original music by independent musicians rather than the clichéd Bollywood loops. Examples of young novae like Prateek Kuhad and Yashraj Mukhate serve the present context well. However, tech-friendliness is mandatory for live streaming platforms. Thus, mostly, technically experienced and fully equipped singers and artistes alone fit in this corner.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, it may be said that the urgent need of the day is to save the musicians of the country. As citizens, we all can help but the government can help more efficiently and on a larger scale than we could. Thus, the central and the state governments must take necessary steps towards safeguarding the livelihood of the struggling musicians during the pandemic. Landlords must reduce their rent so that the tenants could conveniently pay for their stay. The government can also help by providing alternative jobs for these artistes in the culture and tourism departments. As a musician too, in my humble opinion, free online gigs and virtual concerts must be avoided. Only paid music should be promoted. It is only certain that if a large number of well-to-do musicians are entertaining the public for free, the right to paid labor by the needy musicians and artistes is denied. Thus, we all can work together to seek some useful resolution and better the conditions of the artistes in India during such unfortunate times.

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## CHAPTER 10

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# English Language Teaching and Learning during Lockdown

*Amar Singh*

### ABSTRACT

The world recently witnessed the unexpected emergence of a coronavirus that caused the Covid-19 pandemic and severely impacted all aspects of human life. The sudden lockdown that came with the announcement of the pandemic affected health systems, the world economy and, inevitably, education systems across the globe. Due to the pandemic, schools and universities were closed, face-to-face education was suspended and a shift to emergency online teaching was instituted. English language training took its share in this transition and several studies were conducted to investigate the effects of the pandemic on emergency online teaching and the learning of English. MLA eighth edition has been used to make documentation and referencing.

*Keywords:* pandemic, coronavirus, online teaching, blended teaching, etc.

The emergence of the novel coronavirus known as Covid-19 and the pandemic announced by the World Health Organisation (“WHO Director-General’s Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19 – 11 March 2020.”) following the rapid spread of the virus across borders created an unexpected lockdown in nearly all parts of the world. The uncertainty caused by the pandemic challenged almost all aspects of human life, including the field of education. In this situation, schools and higher education institutions across the globe needed to end face-to-face education and continue through online courses, which created confusion and directly impacted all stakeholders such as students, teachers, families and administrators. According to UNESCO (<https://plus.google.com/UNESCO>) more than 90% of students all over the world were affected directly or indirectly by school closures and emergency online learning. New data reported by UNESCO

(<https://plus.google.com/UNESCO>) shows that nearly 1.5 billion students across the world have been affected by this sudden change in instructional delivery, and more than 800 million students have experienced serious challenges in terms of disruption to their education. According to this report, 31 countries implemented full school and college closures while 48 countries continued their education via reduced and part-time schedules. At the same time, to mitigate the pandemic in this transition period, several academic fields were seriously affected, and the teaching of English was not an exception.

From the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, several research studies were conducted that focused on various aspects of emergency online teaching in different disciplines and fields in education. Ranging from science to geography in different segments of education, the effects of Covid-19 were studied in the literature. On the other hand,

Regarding the teachers and students' perceptions and attitudes in terms of the effectiveness and implementation of the emergency online teaching of English, some conflicting findings came to light. While some teachers of English upheld the idea that the transition to emergency online teaching would sustain the quality of language teaching and develop students' language skills, other teachers held negative opinions. On the beneficial side, findings showed that the usefulness and ease of online teaching platforms and learning management systems as an alternative to sustain education during times of emergency, such as with Covid-19, were regarded positively by the teachers. (Rahayu and Wirza, 392-406; Rifiyanti, 31-35)

due to the unplanned nature of emergency online teaching, the studies focused on various aspects of education involving, for instance, the availability of online teaching resources and tools. (Dhavan, 220)

Building upon research findings based on the challenges faced, solutions to problems, the advantages or disadvantages of emergency online teaching, teaching practices and platforms, technological resources and student and teacher-related issues, the general picture of English language teaching requires a comprehensive study based on an integrative literature review. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there is a critical gap in terms of an integrative literature review study reviewing and synthesising studies in the existing literature for this critical period. The first-year experience of the Covid-19 pandemic taking language teaching and learning within

emergency online education is significant for some reasons. Initially, it is critical for the researchers, academics, English language teachers, students and the related stakeholders to understand the global impact of the pandemic specifically on language education. Next, learning from the weaknesses and strengths of the emergency online teaching and learning from a global perspective may guide the program designers, teachers, students, families and school administrators in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of language teaching during such critical periods. From the research perspective, drawing generalisable conclusions is possible through integrative review studies. Thus, a review study illuminating the world's experience of emergency online teaching of English language in the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic may provide critical insights into the pedagogical and techno-pedagogical aspects.

The researchers who studied the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the teaching and learning of the English language focused inevitably on educational technologies and online teaching platforms, since the schools and teachers facilitated various online platforms for teaching and social media applications for smartphones. The findings show that Zoom, Moodle, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Facebook, Blackboard and other platforms were commonly used for delivering the courses and providing intra-communication during the pandemic. These platforms took the place of brick-and-mortar classrooms in the offered course subjects and engaged the students by providing a sense of the online classroom environment. One of the most remarkable findings of this study is that Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams were also favoured for some of their default features, such as recording the sessions, which contributes to the flexibility of online teaching and learning, narrowing the power/status distance between students and teachers, and offering screen sharing opportunities and chat rooms.

Regarding the teachers and students' perceptions and attitudes in terms of the effectiveness and implementation of the emergency online teaching of English, some conflicting findings came to light. While some teachers of English upheld the idea that the transition to emergency online teaching would sustain the quality of language teaching and develop students' language skills, other teachers held negative opinions. On the beneficial side, findings showed that the usefulness and ease of online teaching platforms and learning management systems as an alternative to sustain education during

times of emergency, such as with Covid-19, were regarded positively by the teachers (Rahayu and Wirza, 392-406; Rifiyanti, 31-35). One of the aspects that the teachers valued was that they took on new roles as remote instructors during the pandemic and gained experience teaching online, while also increasing their technological knowledge to integrate pedagogical and content knowledge, which is an important component of teacher competencies. English language teachers viewed hybrid teaching as beneficial and contributing to autonomous learning, in addition to teaching just online.

Due to pedagogical reasons such as a lack of preparation, planning, educational policies for emergency situations, and teachers' limited technological and pedagogical subject understanding, online English teaching did not produce the desired results. Some teachers were not informed or skilled enough to teach English online, since they were unaware of the differences between face-to-face and online teaching. Because majority of the teachers had minimal experience previous to the transfer, our data reveal that they were particularly inept at teaching English online. Students, on the other hand, while this was also true, had more experience dealing with technology challenges. The effectiveness of emergency online instruction was subject to a wide range of expectations. The findings suggest that unless a number of factors are carefully handled, such as developing a good plan for online teaching, assisting teachers and students in gaining access to the necessary infrastructure, taking the necessary precautions in motivating students, and reducing teacher anxiety, global practises of teaching English online may produce similar weaknesses in terms of teaching and learning, as reflected in this study.

As a result, in order to provide quality online English education in schools, policymakers and teacher training programmes must make changes in terms of preparing instructors with the essential pedagogical understanding on these various forms of instruction. Apart from that, not only teachers but also students all around the world faced a number of challenges. Non-accessibility of the internet or computers, as well as a lack of digital literacy, was among the most commonly mentioned issues in various researches. Because few teachers and students had prior experience with online teaching and learning, neither party was able to adjust to the new circumstances or duties in a timely manner.

It may be stated to conclude that, future emergency teaching and learning will require both teachers and students to be prepared. To accomplish so, colleges' English language teacher education programmes should be redesigned as a first step. Although gaining experience in online teaching and learning of English on a worldwide scale was a shared strength resulting from the pandemic for instructors and learners of English, data suggested that this was a novel experience for them.

From the standpoint of the teachers, this shows that they had little or no academic or practical experience teaching English online. As a result, teacher education programmes should prepare students for both classroom and online instruction. In English language teaching departments, more courses devoted to educational technologies or directly address online teaching with the required pedagogical contributions should be added. In-service instructors, on the other hand, require training and practise in order to be prepared to teach successfully and efficiently online.

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## CHAPTER 11

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# Critical Roles of Language and Communication Planning during Pandemics

*Richa Verma and NDR Chandra*

### INTRODUCTION

History has documented that the human race has faced the wrath of communicable diseases right from nomadic hunting communities to agrarian lifestyle, followed by more structured living spaces covering a span of thousands of years. In our efforts to become more habitable and civilised, we started nucleating populations around hamlets, villages, and cities, followed by globalisation to enable foreign invasions for hegemony and trade. Waging of wars, movement across continents, and connected communities not only satisfied nihilistic tendencies, but also brought misfortune and misery in the form of epidemics and pandemics – a few examples being influenza, smallpox and others.

A walk through the history tells us that the *Plague of Justinian*, the first deadliest pandemic of recorded history, arrived in Constantinople, decimating 30-50 million populations. This plague in another form returned as the *Black Death* claiming 200 million human lives in a short span of four years. The fury of pandemic was so detestable that port officials in the city of Ragusa forced sailors to stay under compulsory isolation for 40 days or *quarantino*, which is the genesis of the word quarantine which took to our common vocabulary with the COVID-19 crisis unleashing across the world in 2019. Great Plague of London, Spanish Flu, Smallpox, Cholera, further ravaged the humanity from time to time.

However, despite lack of modern medical advances and right therapy, it was communication between the city officials and normal

population which allowed transfer of orders and ensured that the damage to human life could be controlled. For example, during the Great Plague of London in early 1500s, laws were communicated to citizens to separate and isolate the sick. Non-verbal mnemonics such as hanging a bale of hay outside of infected homes or carrying a white pole while walking outside, in case you are from an infected home, was implemented in order to communicate the risk to the community.

With the passage of time and deep-dive into science-based solutions, it became eminently clear that communication in easily understandable language was the key to develop informed citizens and empowered societies. A consistent flow of authentic information, without any language barrier, has been immensely helpful during the COVID-19 epidemic to convey proper scientific understanding to common people in order to make them aware of the seriousness of this disease. In fact, these events have also brought a new focus to the necessity of tempered language and evolution of novel communication approaches for crisis communication.

Indians have cultivated more than 350 languages and dialects making the country rich cradle of multilingual plurality. The linguistic diversity of India is something to be proud of, which at the same time is an impediment when crucial information is to be provided to a population of 1.3 billion people.

### **EMPHASIS ON LANGUAGES FOR SCIENCE COMMUNICATION**

The necessity of communication and its medium has been clearly brought out in the Draft 5<sup>th</sup> National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2020 where it is mentioned that “*The scarcity of professional and vibrant science outreach and education programmes, along with limited science communication systems for addressing language and regional diversity of India hampers the understanding of grassroots issues.*” This statement is particularly relevant when you look from the standpoint of communication during the pandemic. Therefore, it is important to note that despite our best intentions to communicate in most Indian languages, there exists an unexpressed difficulty. Their main streaming in the time of desperate need is crucial and time-consuming.

This situation also reflects on the lack of acknowledged (science) communicators who could make an impact while communicating in

regional languages to allow seamless coordination at the national level, for example, during the massive COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. Communication barriers are to be avoided to ensure that science communicators are able to connect to masses in a short span of time and that geographical limitations are addressed in order to bring relief to the people.

The challenge of language orientation in a multilingual country and its utility during crisis communication identifies the absolute need and emerging situations of language challenges. The language and communication challenge during the pandemic has also identified the immediate requirement of an aggregating agency that would specialise in communication and language service at the national level to not only serve at the time of crisis but also disseminate useful information and communications to all concerned. This change in orientation would require a well-laid process and operational convergence to ensure that all multilingual communication efforts are seamlessly connected to the requirement of a linguistically-diverse population and reaching to the last person of the society.

Such an orientation of our goals and efforts towards proper communication will revolve around individuals and communities with freedom to secure the “use [their] languages in the activities of communal life’ and ‘freedom from discrimination on the basis of language” (Macías 86–101). Thus, minor languages as communication medium will have to be given equal importance for public health emergencies, such as COVID-19, and for related health information systems. Such an effort at the national level will require a common voice coming from our sociolinguistics scholars, medical fraternity, and citizen stakeholders to assure accurate delivery of medical communications during the time of pandemic or health crisis (Piller 503–515). The following could be considered under the umbrella of wider language and communication strategies:

- National multilingual logistics services
- University-level language students for multilingual services
- Creating software and other trans-linguaging practices
- Multilingual communication competence modules

The proposed orientation of the utilitarian value of communication and languages reinforces our commitment to individuals and their communities and augments the process of developing language-based interventions revolving around linguistic



diversity to provide a versatile social communication tool against the COVID-19 pandemic. A larger movement involving different stakeholders is bound to provide implementation spaces and sensitise powers-to-be for a paradigm shift in language and communication planning. As suggested by Hult and Hornberger such an emphasis will usher “identity construction, build(ing) self-esteem, and intellectual engagement, for our communities” (Hult and Hornberger 30–49).

### **NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATION IN PANDEMIC**

This pandemic has afforded unimaginable challenges in connecting people at various levels of interaction ranging from very young pupils, to college and university students, to business communication, including interactions through telemedicine portals. In essence, new forms of communication used during the pandemic have brought desired changes in language and its implications for sociolinguistics.

Aspects of home isolation and quarantine have demolished the thought of connected communities for now. As being immobilised in respective homes and the norms of social distancing become more operational, it is bound to affect the concepts of linguistic diversity, ease of multilingual communication and puts linguistic minorities in a disadvantageous position (“Researchers study how COVID pandemic is affecting language change”). It is increasingly realised that socially marginalised communities will suffer the most and it remains to be seen what will be the effect of the pandemic on language or how language and communication modalities will take a different shape when we would rely entirely on online communication.

### **GLOBAL CONTOURS OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN COVID-19**

“One of the foremost challenges would be to determine how to convey scientific communication and medical emergencies to multilingual and minority communities” (“Covid-19 language hub. Oxford Languages”). These efforts are also needed to counter the spread of misinformation in order to ensure vital life-saving advice and information is disseminated to allay fear at individual and societal level (*Journal of Anxiety Disorders*).

## **DISRUPTION OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION TEACHING**

Language teaching at all levels of education has undergone disruption as close and direct interactive interface between pupils and teachers has not made the same impact through online sessions during the pandemic (“The app generation: How today’s youth navigate identity, intimacy, and imagination in a digital world”). While online instruction is projected as an equitable opportunity for every student, a big drawback of connectivity remains the issue when it comes to pupils from rural background or suffering from economic penury. Thus, despite having the knowledge of internet operability and computer literacy, there might always be a substantial number of pupils who might remain in a disadvantageous position.

Language and communication are crucial in matters concerning public health as it allows a clear perspective on the prevailing situation and it motivates action on part of everyone involved in the communities. However, it is essential to maintain the message through a crisp and clear language to avoid any confusion and deviation from public health risk. Notably, our life in the era of fast-paced news and social media being updated 24x7 remains vital for accurate statements and information to maintain calm and control through the most testing times of the pandemic. Thus, a gently composed message in a reconciliatory language with clear intention is bound to make a useful impact during COVID-19 pandemic and it would offer strength to the population battling with a public health catastrophe. Thus, everyone plays a role in getting the message across concerning the preventive options and approaches against COVID-19.

## **METAPHORS IN PANDEMIC: HOW TO GIVE HOPE WITH LANGUAGE USED?**

The Indian Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, used metaphors while addressing the scourge of COVID-19 describing Indians as “*disciplined soldiers*” in waging a “*war*” against the epidemic. The decision to bring in a national shutdown was supplemented with the exhortation that citizens should respond to the “war against COVID-19”. In fact the world leaders have used war-time metaphors while addressing their fellow citizens during the crisis. For example, the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, in an official statement mentioned that: “Yes this enemy can be deadly, but it is also beatable

– and we know how to beat it and we know that if as a country we follow the scientific advice that is now being given we know that we will beat it” (Johnson).

A recent perspective by Brandt and Brotelho addressed the use of “perfect storm” to describe the pandemic due to Covid-19 transmission. While discussing the accepted description of a “perfect storm” in context of high transmission risk and mortality posed by COVID-19, the authors tried to discern whether the pandemic is due to an unpredictable force or due to explainable human (in) actions. Thus, the metaphor used to explain the pandemic is a powerful way to communicate our current situation with the language creating public health discourse reflecting our inability to predict the present devastation or future scenario through the imagery of our despair, randomness of event and the intensity of carnage that would reflect a “perfect storm” (Brandt and Botelho 382).

While creating an imagery of volatility of situation and surrender to this ferocious virus, we should exercise utmost sensitivity in creating the right environment of caution, care and containment to ensure that communities are able to remain hopeful despite disproportionate devastation and loss of lives, for such outbreaks are likely to afflict us again due to irrational human actions and disturbances in the perfect ecological balance that had existed over centuries. Thus, the use of right metaphors will help societies to remain hopeful, keep building the right processes to counter catastrophic health events, while remaining cautious about the use of appropriate language and communication practices as the first step in instilling faith and confidence in citizens across national and global communities.

A recent perspective on the use of metaphors in COVID-19 by Elena Semino alluded them as good language tools for communication, yet one should use them with caution to ensure that they do not evoke fear, helplessness, and feeling of being insensitive (“Not Soldiers but Fire-fighters”). Semino suggested that fire metaphors are more appropriate while communicating Covid-19 pandemic, when compared to many other possibilities. The conclusions were drawn from a crowd-sourced “#ReframeCovid” multilingual collection of COVID-19 metaphors (<https://sites.google.com/view/reframecovid/home>). The latter is a COVID-19 metaphor collection available as an open-source document(<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TZqICUdE2C>

vKqZrN67LcmKspY51Kug7aU8oGvK5WEbA/edit#gid=781680773), containing over 550 metaphoric examples in thirty different languages.

Panzeri and coworkers investigated whether the use of war metaphors while communicating the COVID-19 pandemic to the citizens affects their understanding about the pandemic. They suggested that in addition to metaphorical framing the message received also relies on certain socio-political factors such as political orientation, information source, etc. Notably, it was not possible to establish whether the use of metaphors augmented individuals' pre-existing set of beliefs. It was also difficult to confirm if metaphors helped in switching of beliefs, behavior and priorities while taking decisions.

### **NEW COVID-19 LEXICON AND ITS USE IN ROUTINE COMMUNICATION**

The advent of pandemic has brought new lexicon which is not only appreciated by the medical community, but it has also reached colloquial conversational styles of common people. While discussing unabated disease transmission through social or religious gatherings, it has become quite acceptable to use the term '*super-spreader*' to suggest a set of people having potential to significantly contribute to the virus spread. Thus, many such words and terminologies have become part of our everyday COVID-19 lexicon and are understood perfectly well by everyone.

All the way from '*COVID-19*' – a portmanteau that got introduced in the Merriam-Webster's online dictionary within a month of its announcement, to 'coronnials' – babies who were born during the pandemic, to 'quaranteen' – a young child who become a teenager during the pandemic, to 'covidiot' – folks who fail to understand the severity of disease and have risky behavior, the rapid evolution of the pandemic lexicon has been quite fascinating.

We undertake 'contact tracing' to identify potential 'carriers' of infection in order to curtail 'community spread' thereby bringing down the number of 'corona-positive' cases thus reducing the 'case fatality ratio' in a given set of population. 'Social distancing' and 'home isolation' refer to maintaining a 2 meter distance between people or the state of being confined inside the house to help 'flatten the curve'. These phrases are commonly used and understood and have helped expanding the vocabulary of a common person.

## LANGUAGE OF EMPATHY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.  
If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

Nelson Mandela

We grow up with language, which is used by us to communicate, think and to make understand simple and complex issues. The pervasive nature of communication and the ubiquitous use of language allow us to navigate through society and communities. But, more often successful communication not only requires a delicate balance between message and meaning, but it also demands the use of unambiguous lexicon and correct linguistics approach to convey our intentions and actions. Given the remarkable subtleties engendered in a language and choice of words, the power of communication could be felt beyond the primary receiver making impact on a very large audience. Thus, language has a clear impact on our expressions and the correct use of language could be of high value during the time of pandemic.

The nonstop communication network played out by public figure and media during coronavirus pandemic can be looked at from the standpoint of empathy and bringing calm and solace to distraught citizens. While communicating under such situations, it is vital to ensure that a sombre yet reassuring language would bring a sense of calm to the vulnerable communities. A recent study by Tian and coworkers that when communication resonating a person’s feelings looking for emotional support were more appropriate and effective when compared to messages conveying critical or diminished emotions. The effect of supportive communication was examined and the theory of psychological reactance was factored in to understand how well-intentioned messages could still be perceived as insensitive during troubled times. A well-received and appreciated message should not convey the feeling of control or be offered without sound justification.

The spread of COVID-19 and all the efforts to publicly empathise with citizens has made an interesting study in understanding the critical role of media and communication technologies. Given that there is an obvious competition between the political parties to reach media platforms with dynamic communication, it has become imperative to ensure that the message is relayed to the public without deviating from the correct scientific

information and health policies. In essence, the critical communication dynamics for societal benefit has been one of the biggest challenges during the coronavirus pandemic.

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## CHAPTER 12

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# Re-imagining of Liberal Arts shows the Environment in the Presence of COVID-19

*Deepesh Kumar Thakur*

### ABSTRACT

Knowledge gives humility, from humility, one attains character; from character, one acquires wealth; from wealth good deeds/ righteousness follow and then happiness.

The decisions made across every sector of society in preventing and responding to crises is shaped by what the people making those decisions know, how they think, and what they value. This is the real power of humanity that shapes the education and a liberal-arts one in particular. Society needs flexible, adaptive thinkers able to re-imagine themselves and the world. We overlook the societal impact of education when we think of higher education only in individualised terms i.e., job outcomes or equate quality with social reputation. As important as people are, the global pandemic illustrates that we need to care more about what and how we learn from the environment. In navigating this new remote world, let's not lose sight of the kind of society we want and need to be. Let's make value-based decisions, not fear-based ones, about our educational systems. The environment of the host, meanwhile, is a factor in their health – and, therefore, their vulnerability to COVID-19 – in several ways. Unequal access to safety in the area of housing increases exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution and to damp conditions, which increase the risk of pandemic situation. The workplaces will be utilised judiciously and scattered working hours will be a new normal post-pandemic. “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.” Albert Einstein

The workforce of the twentieth century is likely to be much more heterogeneous than any other generation in the past. The same is true of twentieth century organisations and their need to make good use of their available human resources asset. Effective use of an organisation's human resources asset and modern technology in the twenty-first century can greatly enhance learning for all workers and managers, especially those with

various forms of idea. Along with an introduction to the concept of appreciative inquiry, this presents how computer-aided instruction is one method that can be used by leaders and educators to engage students and encourage learning.

*Keywords:* workforce, Liberal Arts, Management, Communication, English, Language

## INTRODUCTION

- *Diversity Management:* The Cultural, generational, personal, and professional differences as well as unique motivational factors are characteristics of learners in today's academia. The student population of nearly all institutions has drastically changed from what it was twenty and thirty years ago.
- *Cultural Management:* It is assumed treating others the way one wants to be treated is sufficient for healthy interpersonal relationships and, perhaps this is true to some extent. When it comes to the diversity of cultures and different cultural practices, the "Golden Rule", treating others the way one would like to be treated may not always apply in each case and, thus, some have resorted to adopting the "Platinum Rule" in their workplace.
- *Workforce Diversity Management:* Is globalisation causing the development of a worldwide culture? Maybe! Some reflective thinking questions to consider are: Is it possible that globalisation will cause a country's national identity to be lost as more international firms are incorporating management and operation styles from the developed nations to their business practices? While reflecting on such questions, one must acknowledge that cultures tend to regularise human behaviour which can make predictability of behaviour a bit easier for researchers and global employees.
- *Spiritual Diversity:* Generational, religious, spiritual, and age diversity are realities of life and organisational leaders must be cognisant of these trends. This discusses generational, spiritual and age related aspects of diversity as they relate to the workplace. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that many of the younger workers do not possess the skills and experience that the older workers have. The younger workers also have different moral and cultural values and different work ethics.



- *Organisational Learning and Knowledge:* Knowledge management is a very important part of each organisation's culture as well as each manager's responsibility. Accordingly, this focuses on creating a culture of effectively managing knowledge and learning in today's diverse workplace. Organisational learning and effective knowledge management practices are a necessity in today's global work environment where information becomes available and obsolete very quickly.

Given below around Seven hundred and eighty-five human resource professionals responded to a questionnaire about diversity issues in their organisations:

OP.....=

Analyses were conducted to determine the factors associated with these two factors:

- (a) Adoption of diversity training
- (b) Perceived training success

Results revealed that both training adoption and perceived training success were strongly associated with top management support for diversity.

Identity texts in written, spoken, visual, musical and combinations in multimodal form created by students in culturally and linguistically diverse class rooms are shared with multiple audiences' viz. peers, parents, teachers etc. for positive feedback. Presentation and discussion vis-a-vis transmission social constructivist and transformative approaches to pedagogy result in the affirmation of self in interactions with multiple audiences. In order to address three main influences on education systems viz. linguistic and cultural diversity in the wake of population escalation, recognition of English as the language of economic and social advancement and technological developments facilitating change of global economy from Industrial age to Information age, teachers create interpersonal space for maximum academic development by ensuring optimal cognitive engagement and optimal identity investment on the part of students.

The world has made the social and economic exchange between people of different communities and cultures.

## Critical Framing

The premise of critical Framing purports to be on investigation of the socio-cultural contexts, purpose of learning and designs of meaning. Socio-cultural contexts flash diverse and globally connected lives where the forces of migration, multiculturalism, and economic integration intensify the process of change.

Traditional curricula weed out inferior literacies viz. Text types (Picture book or fiction) and items like blogs, emails, websites oral practices and visual literates from the mainstream literacy practices. Inclusion and Exclusion tend to govern the traditional curricula. Critical Framing enables learners to conceptualise by incorporating template designs on websites and blogs as non-linear reading paths and varying affordances of different modes. Writing may be envisaged as just one part of the multimodal ensemble.

Overt Instruction is, in fact, collaborative efforts on the part of teachers and students for accomplishing complex tasks. It would be erroneous it consider it as transmission, drill and rote-Learning. Three pedagogical orientations viz. Transmission, Social constructivist and Transformative, nested within each other, enhance thinking ability of learners.

## CONCLUSION

Transmission transmits information and skills; social constructivist constructs knowledge and understanding with the help of teachers and students and Transformative enables learners to acquire insight and critical literacy for reading between the lines of societal dispraises. In summary, we have developed societies that disrupt ecology, increase vulnerability to disease, facilitate disease transmission, and in which many are unable to take necessary preventive precautions or to access care. This would require that we grapple with complex and evolving realities and environments that increase the risk of new diseases emerging and that accelerate climate change. It would also require recognition of the evolving roles that we can and should play. Lastly, it would require a systems-based approaches to prevention in order to reduce the risk of emergencies and if they occur to prevent disasters. We need to consider the interconnected systems that influence planetary health and the balance between human and ecological wellbeing, as we set about the slow work of repurposing the building blocks of society.

Multiliteracies may be defined as an approach to literacy theory and pedagogy integrating two aspects of literacy viz. linguistic diversity and multimodal forms of linguistic expression. Two significant changes in the global scenario viz. mushroom growth of different modes of communication due to technological developments like Internet, Multimedia and digital media and linguistic and cultural diversity in the wake of migration facilitated the coinage of multiliteracies. Communication patterns (technologically determined) and usage of the English language (culturally determined) triggered the emergence of a new literacy. Globalisation requires interactions between individuals hailing from different cultures. Multimedia has amalgamated sounds and images with text and speech. Pedagogy of multiliteracies was formulated in order to target ‘grasping of multiple discourses’ and forms of representation in both public and professional domains in addition to Reading and writing and enable students to navigate within culturally and linguistically diverse communities. “The concept of multiliteracies challenges the traditional idea that there is only single correct literacy and supports the notion of multi-modal literacy in which linguistic and cultural diversity is incorporated to create learning conditions for full social participation.”

Three pedagogical orientations viz. Transmission, Social constructivist and Transformative, nested within each other, enhance thinking ability of learners. Transmission transmits information and skills; social constructivist constructs knowledge and understanding with the help of teachers and students and Transformative enables learners to acquire insight and critical literacy for reading between the lines of societal dispraises.

- (i) Learning with deep understanding: It entails development of critical literacy rather than simple understanding of the text.
- (ii) Building on pre-existing knowledge: It takes stock of students’ language and cultural background.
- (iii) Promoting active learning: It focuses on learner’s control of learning.
- (iv) Support within the community of learners: It recognises learning as socialisation into particular communities of practice.

Optimum academic development has overt links with cognitive engagement and identity investment within the interpersonal space

of the Learning community. Students' creative outputs are termed identity texts (written, spoken, musical, visual, dramatic or combinations in multimodal form) Students tend to receive positive feedback when they share their texts with multiple audiences (Peers, teachers, parents, different classes, media etc.)

The present paper deals with the importance of language competence in every walk of the professional life of an engineer for his bright future and how the teachers and students need to make integrated efforts and build their competency in language skills that would enable students successful in studies, campus interviews, and their corporate life.

## CHAPTER 13

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# Positivism in Pandemic: A Critical Analysis of Albert Camus's *The Plague*

*Raju Raosabheb Salve*

### ABSTRACT

Pandemics have plagued the people in every century. Controlling them becomes a complex task subsequently. Positivism in the pandemics builds hopes and offers meaning to many lives. It helps the people to realise painful conditions of others and motivate them to find significant ways sooner or later. Literature of pandemic is a vital account of the deadly infectious diseases which victimize millions of people worldwide. The characters penned by Albert Camus are enlightened by positivism. They are brave and fearless to face the peak of pandemic and help the infected people at the end of the day.

*Keywords:* Pandemic, literature, characters, positivism etc.

### INTRODUCTION

Covid 19 pandemic was more perilous than our imagination. Like many others, we, although against our minds, locked ourselves in our houses. We tried to make sense to accept the reality that a virus stops the entire world or to understand how pandemics brought similar difficult times for our people in the past and how they made it through. Media outlets reached us with horrible pandemic stories of the Spanish Flu of 1918-19 in which many indigenous communities were forced to the brick of extinction. In India, the pandemic of influenza identified in 1957 victimized million people and killed a thousand. History narrates the stories of a changed life in many ways.

Literature is one of the reliable documents describing the deadliest pandemics that rose across the world. The stories of heroes who fight against the pandemics positively and bravely and victims who suffer from alienation and death make readers a part of them in

the end. The unique writing style of many writers portrays the horrible picture of pandemics. Giovanni Boccaccio's Decameron (1353) describes the bubonic plague epidemic in the stories that cost uncounted deaths of the native Florence. The books like *A Journal of the Plague* (1664) written by Daniel Defoe, *The Last Man* (1826) and *The Scarlet Plague* (1912) both written by Mary Shelley provide important references to the plague. In the novel 'Twilight in Delhi', Ahmed Ali portrays the outbreak of the Spanish Flu spread in 1918. He pens 'Delhi Became a city of the dead...' The outbreak of smallpox is intensively composed in Rabindranath Tagore's Bengali poem *Puratan Bhritiya* and works of Malayalam writers like Thakazhi Sivasankara's *Thottiyude Makan* and Kakkanandan's *Vasoori*. We can say that literature has become a popular medium to delineate stories of human emotions and moments of crisis.

### **POSITIVISM IN PANDEMIC: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLAGUE**

Published in 1947, Albert Camus's *The Plague* is the story of a plague sweeping the French city Oran. It is undoubtedly a masterpiece to understand positivism in pandemic through the characters. Accepting the fact that death is reality is quite an awful thing. The writer describes the selfishness of Oran citizens when they become prisoners of the plague. But the feeling of alienation when they are quarantined by their family members, friends, and known persons, makes them suffer intensively. It has characterised their existence. Remarkably, positivism helps them identify the pandemic as a common concern and prepares them to control the fear in due course. At first, everybody is sure that the plague will disperse on its own. But the positive thinking, without taking the necessary preventative measures, makes the pandemic more deleterious and the citizens give up on the recovery of their people.

In the novel, positivism is portrayed by the characters like Dr. Bernard Rieux, Jean Tarrou, Raymond Rambert, and Joseph Grand. Dr. Bernard Rieux is the most responsible person in this novel. He dares to go out at the peak of a deadly infection to treat and save lives. We can find true heroism, although he consistently denies it, in his courageous acts. Like any other man, he faces difficulty facing the plague in the beginning. In Part I, he says, 'a dead man has no substance unless one has actually seen him dead.' Dr. Rieux realises the inability of Oran citizens to understand the pain of others.

According to him, when they see the dead bodies of known persons, they can learn the lesson from the worst reality of the pandemic. It is noticeable that Dr. Rieux is not strong enough to solve the problem but his positive attitude helps him do the duty more sincerely and fearlessly. In the conversation with Rambert, he asserts 'that is what I'm doing yet why I do not know.' The positivism of Dr. Rieux works for the people. To him, the culprits should be arrested depending on the circumstance. He only wants to defend the citizens of Oran. Camus is successful in portraying Dr. Rieux as the voice of reason among the crowd. We can see the reflection of Camus's personality in him. Being an atheist, he thinks that man himself must go out to help his people.

Jean Tarrou is another character who gains our attention in the story. Vacationing in Oran safely in the beginning, he stays with Dr. Rieux to fight against the plague and becomes the last victim. He enjoys life by doing the things he likes. His courageous behavior makes him unchanged at the peak of the pandemic. He has sympathy with men and is fully aware of his duty as a good human being. Jean Tarrou, although an outsider, observes Oran society objectively than those in the city. He thinks that his personal and social responsibilities are extraordinarily similar to Dr. Rieux. Like Dr. Rieux, he is also an atheist and does not believe in the intrinsic rational and moral meaning of death, suffering, and human existence. For him, human existence is meaningful when we have a noble struggle against death and suffering.

Raymond Rambert is a former football player and is assigned as a feature writer in Oran when the city is seized. Like any other citizen, he tries to escape from the city but fails. The circumstances change him from a hacked journalist into a responsible person. He offers money to several needy people who are underground. Early in the story, he pleads with the civil authorities to leave and meet his wife. Later he wants to remain in the city and assist Dr. Rieux. His positive behavior makes him an impressive character. Unlike Raymond Rambert, Joseph Grand is a municipal clerk. In the rise of the plague, he brings salvation to the society of Oran. Without any question, he is busy counting the deaths and helps the people through relieving grief, sacrifice with his uncontaminated dedication. He helps Tarrou to form and retain the sanitary squads. The data collected by Joseph Grand is crucial for Dr. Rieux for saving people in the town. Although he is old but manages himself to give time to duties. Dr.

Rieux commends that ‘All he had asked was to be allotted light duties: he was too old for anything else. He could give his time from six to eight every evening.’ (134)

## CONCLUSION

The characters of the novel bring hope and positivism to the story. They are busy saving people several times. There are many complex situations in the story where they lose hope and positivism but through their efforts, humanity conquers in conclusion.

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## CHAPTER 14

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# Manifestation of Pandemic Crises in Jiban Mukhopadhyay's Poems

*Lt. Radhika Subhankar Mukherjee*

### ABSTRACT

The world has undergone a lot of natural calamities, which resulted in the Human beings' moments of crisis, despair, instability and fear. Pandemics are a natural calamity that has affected the lives of the mankind in diverse ways. This pandemic is not new to us in fact the history has recorded many such pandemics in the history of mankind. The history of pandemics has chronicled the Coronavirus as a prominent one in compared to Thypoid Fever, Measles, Smallpox, Cholera and Plagues. One could find references of pandemics in art and literatures of that time. This Pandemic has affected the lives of the people adversely and few authors, artists, poets came up with their work of art during this moment of crisis. They wrote on various themes such as despair, hopelessness, fear, devastation, crisis, disease, lockdowns, alienation, etc. Jiban Mukhopadhyay is a poet who started writing poems from an early age. He writes both in Bengali and English. He writes on various social and human themes – miseries, pains, sufferings, anguishes, courage, hopes and aspirations. The pandemic-driven human miseries have stirred Jiban Mukhopadhyay's mind to come up with his second book entitled 'Shed Tears, My Soul, Shed Tears.' This paper is an attempt to study Jiban Mukhopadhyay's 'Shed Tears, My Soul, Shed Tears.' It is also an attempt to analyse his poems as Pandemic crisis.

*Keywords:* Epidemic, Pandemic, Dream, Coronavirus and Lockdown

The world has undergone a lot of natural calamities, which resulted in the Human beings' moments of crisis, despair, instability and fear. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the Pandemic is defined as: "occurring over a wide geographic area and affecting an exceptionally high proportion of the population." Pandemics are a natural calamity that has affected the lives of the mankind in diverse ways. This pandemic is not new to us. In fact history has recorded many such pandemics in the history of mankind. According to Dan Epstein, a spokesman for the Pan American Health Organisation, a regional

office of the World Health Organisation: “A pandemic is basically a global epidemic – an epidemic that spreads to more than one continent.” (Steele 2020)

The history of pandemics has chronicled the Coronavirus as a prominent one as compared to Typhoid Fever, Measles, Smallpox, Cholera and Plagues. One could find references of pandemics in art and literatures of that time. This Pandemic has affected the lives of the people adversely and few authors, artists, poets came up with their work of art during this moment of crisis. They wrote on various themes such as despair, hopelessness, fear, devastation, crisis, disease, lockdowns, alienation, etc.

There are various books that refer to the Pandemic crisis such as: *The History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides (c. 460-400BC), where the author describes to the typhoid fever that resulted in the weakness of the Athenian army during the war. *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio is a Frame Story Novella, which has 100 stories narrated by the group of seven young women and three young men, who takes shelter in the deserted villa outside of Florence to escape the Black Death – Plague. *Decameron* also depicts the experience of the misfortune triggered by the disease. *The Last Man* by Mary Shelley was one of the first apocalyptic novels, telling of a future world that had been devastated by a plague. *The Scarlet Plague* by Jack London is renowned as one of the first instances of a post-apocalyptic fiction in modern literature. *The Betrothed* by Alessandro Manzoni, *The Plague* by Albert Camus’ and *A Journal of the Plague Year* by Daniel Defoe also portray the unusual resemblances among the Covid-19 pandemic and the chronological occurrences of plagues beyond geographical locations and time.

Living through a pandemic is something many of us have certainly not envisioned. The flow of life feels constantly altered, life becomes unpredictable, and the crisis appears endless. There are many poets across the globe who penned down their emotions and feelings about the pandemics such as plague, smallpox, Typhoid, Cholera and Covid-19 outbreak. Some wrote about the imposed lockdowns, deadly pandemic, isolation, Hope, Fear, uncertainty, etc. Rabindranath Tagore in his Bengali poem *Puratan Bhritya* tells the aching story of much reviled house help who tries her best to bring back her master to good health but herself accedes to Smallpox.

Jiban Mukhopadhyay is a poet who started writing poems from an early age. He writes both in Bengali and English. He writes on

various social and human themes – miseries, pains, sufferings, anguishes, courage, hopes and aspirations. His first book, *Rising from the Ashes of Bengal's Partition*, records the untold story of the India's partition, the Partition's generation, their fortitude to step forward with guts and courage for leading a new life. The pandemic-driven human miseries have stirred Jiban Mukhopadhyay's mind to come up with his second book entitled *Shed Tears, My Soul, Shed Tears*.

*Shed Tears, My Soul, Shed Tears* is a unique collection of 12 poems that manifests life during the spread of the new coronavirus, lockdowns, quarantine, immigrant workers, global recession, massive human miseries, death, nightmares, farewell and hope to see the world free from pandemic crisis. It is a rare to find poems written on such a huge canvas – about human life in distress, the suffering of the millions and the gratefulness to the health workers and the government at large. His poems also resonate about hope and aspirations for a better tomorrow. This research paper includes five of the poems from Jiban Mukhopadhyay's Poetry Book *Shed Tears, My Soul, Shed Tears – Shed Tears, My Soul, Shed Tears, Life on the Run, Dreams Turned Nightmare, That was the Year That and Hope – 2021*.

Jiban Mukhopadhyay's first poem *Shed Tears, My Soul, Shed Tears* is a haunting image of the days that were spent by the people worldwide during the peak of Covid-19 pandemic. The poem slowly escalates to the larger menace that had surrounded the world. The poem provides an emotional nuance of how lives during pandemic had become – jagged and unbalanced. While on one hand the city of Mumbai is depicted as all isolated and how the lonely streets, that were once crowded and cheery, seems depressing. The opening line of the poem reads: "Where the millions have gone?" (13) The poet describes the situations that Covid-19 has aroused. There is imposed lockdown and the city is vacant. Mumbai was never the same before. There is no shouting, screaming, curses, abuses, overtakes, smoke, dust, beggar, snatcher, pickpocket and kid selling lemon-and-chilly or flowers or monkey nuts. The poet is upset that there is not even a single soul on the road, but he could only find the miles and miles of empty road as nobody is going out of their house. The poet talks about the grand orchestra of the Mumbai, as he says:

No plane flies in the azure sky,  
 No boat swims in the grayish ocean,  
 No train moves in or out –  
 Nobody rushes to work.  
 The grand orchestra of life in my Mumbai  
 Is dead. (14)

Here the poet talks about the sky where there are no planes to fly, no boats to swim in the beautiful ocean and no trains moving up and down. There is no one who is rushing to board any of the means of transport due to pandemic lockdown. The mentioning of all the lively aspects of pre-covid stricken Mumbai such as beautiful grass, parks and grounds, playing kids, walkers, joggers, lovers holding hands are no more. All these makes the silence of lockdown appear with greater intensity in the poem. The absence of people on the streets is witnessed everywhere. Everything came to the stand still situation and these means of transport that was the orchestra of Mumbai is now almost compared to death. Further the poet expresses his fears for survival, as he mentions:

Silence – stone dead  
 Has frozen my soul.  
 A cold, dumb and deadly nightmare  
 Shivers – kills my inside.  
 Ghosts have taken over my lively city –  
 Days and nights,  
 Both are desolate  
 Not even a stray dog or vagabond dares out.  
 ‘Don’t go out’, stay safe inside’ –  
 Just survive.  
 Somehow. (14)

The poet envisions that the ghosts have taken over his lively city. There is silence everywhere that freezes his soul, and it appears to him as a deadly nightmare which tries to kill him from within. Both the days and nights are desolate and not even a stray dog or vagabond dares to come out of their shelter. Everyone has been asked to stay home, stay safe indoors to survive somehow. Further the poets illustrate about the locked schools and colleges where there is neither the sound of kids nor any sight of dreamy eyed young boys and girls. The stadiums, playgrounds, racecourses are now all quarantines whereas the offices, banks, markets all are forced to be closed. The poet explains the conditions of the bosses and sahibs who are now at home, as he elaborates:

Bosses and sahibs are home,  
 Wives boss them over to sweep, mop and dust,  
 Work from home is the new norm. (15)

Here in the above excerpt the poet talks about the reversal of roles of the bosses and sahibs who were once giving orders in their offices now they are taking orders of the wives and are asked to do

the domestic work at home. Thus, the poet highlights the new trend of the pandemic lockdown is the “Work from home” (15). The poet points out the state of the politicians and ministers who are at loss due to this pandemic situation. There no morcha, michil, slogan shouting, agitation, meetings in Azad Maidan except the gloomy silence that is spread all over. The Migrants who support the city’s lifeline became jobless, starving with hunger, with no wages to survive and thus, left in distress. The places of worship such as the Temples, Mosques, Churches, Gurudwaras all are shut. The Gods and deities are safe in isolation as there are no devotees, puja, prayer, music in the premises. The government laid the set of rules to be followed that prevents us from shaking our hands, hugging, and kissing. There is no freedom to express the warmth of life in fact we are forced – “Stay home, stay inside, stay safe” (16). We have been asked to maintain social distance, wear masks, gloves and use sanitizers just as the frogs in the well.

The poet has also conveyed his gratitude to the Cops, Doctors, Nurses, Ward Boys, Sanitary workers who worked day and night for the safety of all just like the Good Samaritans and White Angels of life. Further the poet is in all praises for the milkmen, egg and pau-wallas, chemists, grocers, vegetable and fruit vendors for meeting all the needs of the millions of people inside their home or at door step.

However, the central theme of the poem, which is portrayed in the lines: “Quiet Vampires, messenger of the death – The bloody ‘novel coronavirus’” (17). The real problem is not the lockdown or the resulting isolation but how the world is facing death every passing moment and how uncertain life has become. There is no God, no Priest, and no monk to offer either a prayer or blessing. The devastated life is portrayed by referring to the absence of people to do the last rites of the dead person. The tears that are being shed for all those lost lives, those unsaid goodbyes, the gloom, and the dangerous uncertainty. The tears are being shed for humanity.

The migrant labourers are the ones who were affected the most during the pandemic period. The poet in the poem *Life on the Run* makes the readers aware about the plight of the migrant labourers by comparing them to the bees. As the opening line of the poem reads: “Bees fly fast in thousands from the broken hive –” (19). The bees work hard to collect honey from the flowers to build their hives, but the humans destroy them. In the similar way, the labourers from the various parts of the country had migrated to big cities to earn their

livelihood were left helpless and destitute. The very labourers who helped to build hundreds of houses were left homeless. They didn't even have enough money and they lost their jobs. They were thirsty and hungry and walked miles with their family and luggage till they got some means of transport that would take them back to their homeland. In this journey some fell dead on the way, got crashed under the speeding trucks or inside the trains due to hunger and thirst. The description to suicide is also portrayed in the poem when the poet says:

Some die on rail tracks –  
Trying to shorten the distance  
They cut short their lives under speeding trains! (21)

The poet recalls the chilling memories of lockdown when many people suffered just to see or get to know the whereabouts of their near and dear ones. Some migrants succeed in reaching their home and are welcomed, loved, and hugged by their family members though the neighbours are not glad to see them. They are not even considered as humans by some neighbours who, instead of providing them means to reach their homes, suspect them to be 'Carriers of the deadly coronavirus' (24). The simple yet emotionally rich language of the poem makes the readers emotional and at the same time compels them to think about our reaction to such catastrophes. As Durga Puja is the most gorgeous festival of the Bengalis, the poem ends with a description of the unique Durga Puja pandal, organised by Barisha Club, Behala, Kolkata. It is the image of a poor migrant mother which replaces the gorgeous idol of Mother Goddess Durga. She was accompanied by her four 'migrant children namely Ganesha, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Kartik. This idol was a wonderful creation that symbolises the plight of the poor migrant mother is articulated in the following excerpts from the poem:

In a unique Durga puja pandal in Kolkatta,  
A poor migrant mother replaces  
The gorgeous idol of the divine mother;  
She wears no jewelry,  
Carries no weapon,  
She hold food grain sacks and medical relief  
In her ten hands;  
Her four kids are half-clad –  
She is a poor migrant mother in distress,  
Rushing to her parents' home! (25)

Human beings have had a natural impulse to understand matters better when examples are used to explain. The poem *Dreams Turned Nightmares* does exactly that. The poem illustrates the lives of middle class and the poor class people who strive to climb up the social ladder through their hard work. But the pandemic shattered their lives and brought them to a poor condition wherein they are pressed under the pressure of economic burden. The illustrations of Ramesh, Seema, Sohini and Rina is depicted in the poem to emphasise the poor financial conditions and helplessness of the people due to lockdown. The lockdown had stolen the bread and butter of many people as it is observed in the poem:

Small people's small dreams ran dry;  
Millions of working people lost their income,  
Because of the lockdown.  
The young hopefuls got frustrated –  
The lockdown stole their livelihood. (58)

The lockdown shattered the dreams of many as many lost their jobs, young men and women got frustrated looking out for decent jobs. They had no choice but to choose some jobs that didn't meet their standards yet still they had to take it up for the survival of their family. The lockdown took away their peace, job, and livelihood. The poem brings together to make a strong impact upon the readers as it stresses on their luck:

But their luck turned back a full cycle –  
First, they were hit hard by demonetisation,  
And just when they were about to recover,  
The lockdown struck them harder. (59)

The illustration of the Snake and the Ladder game is used to express the poets concern towards the millions of upwardly mobile people and their conditions during the long-imposed lockdown that “Crashed again to ground zero” (59). The people are frustrated, restless and are desperate to see the lockdown lifted which is reflected in the ending lines of the poem:

Restless they are – waiting in the ring  
For the damned lockdown to go,  
Sure they will rise from the ashes  
To live a new life –  
Like a Phoenix! (59)

*That was the Year That was* talks about the whole year of pandemic (2020) when human life was turned upside down. The poet rightly points out the year to be a horrible year as it is stated in Latin phrase:

“The year 2020 has been our annus horribilis!” (80) the poem also reflects on the wars, epidemic, plague, Spanish flu, smallpox that brought death and misery to millions. The history of pandemic crises is observed in the following lines taken from the poem:

History tells us  
Every hundred years on,  
A large scale epidemic like  
Plague, Spanish flue, small pox or something else  
Bring death and misery to millions. (80)

The poet regards the year 2020 as the year in which the Devil’s coronavirus infected over 114 million people and took away the lives of around 2.5 million across the world. The poet also reflects on the good aspect of the lockdown where it taught us “Living simply and thinking high!” (81) On one hand it taught the well-to-do people to think about simple life on the other hand the common man may not even have the luxury of thinking high as he must meet the basic needs of the family. The situation made people to think based on their own personal circumstances. While the rich were thinking about how they had spent a life of rush up until then and so tried to find a meaning to their life. On the other hand, those living on meagre wages were worried about how they were to fulfill their basic needs.

The poem effectively conveys the disparity that exists in society and how one year of calamity brought the reality, as bitter as it may be to clear light. The poem makes the readers ponder about their own situation and the society. The poem also tried to highlight the change in the communication both at personal and professional levels that are conducted with the help of technology such as cellphones, skype, zoom video webinars and online platforms. The concluding line of the poem reflects the solace that vaccines have brought and there is a hope to see this devil named ‘Coronavirus’ finally dead.

The only reason that was keeping everyone going despite the blow received during the lockdown due to Covid-19 virus, was the ‘Hope’ that things will get back to normal and everything will improve. In this poem titled *Hope – Twenty Twenty-One*, the poet expresses what everyone was silently praying for a bright and favorable future in the New Year. The year 2020 which had shattered down innumerable lives made everyone only look forward for a better year. The hope that the poet expresses for every sphere of human life is an example of giving voice to many silent prayers. A



hope to bring back everything to normalcy and showering of smiles is reflected in the following lines:

We all hope our economy will grow,  
 People will get back lost jobs,  
 Trade, commerce and business will thrive,  
 Things will gradually get shaped up  
 And smiles will come back on people's faces. (86)

The year 2021, however, had brought bittersweet events along with it. Although vaccines for the virus were found and many recovered from the disease, the social problems and the lowered economy faced no great improvement. The poet also stresses on living peacefully as he says:

The caged life under lockdown  
 Might have given us a lesson or two –  
 Introspect about living life with less,  
 No chasing the mirage and get lost for good,  
 Look deeply inside and live in peace. (87)

The poet rightly points out that one needs to introspect and check their conduct. One must learn living with less and the lockdown has driven home a lesson to all. The world will be beautiful if we live in peace. The poet further states that life moves on because of the law of nature. We had witnessed war, pandemic, lockdown, recession, poverty, joblessness, hunger, etc. and these things are part and parcel of life which comes and goes. The illustration of people stumbling and falling, brushing off the dust, is compared to sufferings, miseries and despair. We often get injured and soon our wounds are healed. We move on ahead with hopes, aspirations, and dreams for beginning a fresh new life in the new year of hope. The poem has long, continuous lines portraying the continuous hope and yet at the same time these hopes are being shattered by the government. Despite the contradictions that are presented in the poem, the poet reiterates that irrespective of whether we face any problems, we must keep hoping for a better future because:

Even if you fall on your face,  
 You're still moving forward. (88)

All the above five poems of Mukhopadhyay reflect the pandemic crises. The pandemic has undoubtedly shattered our lives but still there is hope in future to be free from the shackles of the Coronavirus. Once again, we will experience our freedom of moving around, meeting people in person and living life to the fullest. He

also wants us to understand the situations of the underprivileged masses and suggests us to introspect and live life peacefully.

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## CHAPTER 15

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# The COVID-19 Crisis, its Catch-phrase “Stay Safe, Stay Home” and Women

*Rajni Singh*

### ABSTRACT

The rapid surge in the Covid-19 cases globally and the series of lockdowns that the world experienced brought apocalyptic visions of an ending. Moreover, the media reports on the pandemic appeared more horrifying than the real because of its “constructions” of health emergency. In the midst of this mega-crisis emerged a fascinating catch-phrase: ‘Stay Safe, Stay Home.’ While ‘Stay Safe, Stay Home’ has become a dire necessity to combat the pandemic, it conflicts with the social reality of those women who bear the brunt of working both at home and work or simply do not find home as a safe place. It is alarming to see a spike in the cases of domestic violence as a result of the pandemic. Moreover, the concept of work-from-home fails to offer distinction between distractions and actual working space for women. The study attempts to present a gendered view of the Covid-19 pandemic and tends to argue that while the virus does not discriminate, it is affecting women differently.

*Keywords:* Covid-19 pandemic, Stay Safe, Stay Home, women, Home, domestic violence, gendered view

The fascinating appeal of the catch-phrase – “Stay Safe, Stay Home” – has turned into a jarring refrain with the surreptitious striking back of the Coronavirus. Staying home, which was once a luxury to a certain class and section of the society, has now become a dire necessity for existence of all. But is this catch-phrase really woman-friendly? A short film, “*Listen To Her*” produced and directed by Nandita Das with the support of UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, and the South Asia Foundation, exposes what the romanticised quarantine posts on social media conceal. In this film of seven minutes, the audience watches a middle-class-educated-

working-slightly privileged woman struggling to create a balance between work and home. She plays the ideal homely and professional woman who is supposed to display her dexterity in all the roles that she has been given or has voluntarily chosen. While negotiating a deal on a zoom call, the audience watches her attending to the needs of a child and meeting the demands of a husband, all the time while she is working. She assures the caller that she would look closely at the work files after her son falls asleep, indicating a factor that bars her from being productive during regular working hours. Amidst this, she receives a call from an unknown woman seeking help from abuse in a voice, which rises barely above a whisper, as is the case with victims attempting to escape from abuse. Though the former woman reaches out to the concerned authorities, she faces certain indifference because of the rising appeals for help and limited people for the job. This film exposes some grim realities that this pandemic has brought with itself. This narrative is a classic example of the “double shift” that women have to shoulder. The other woman faces abuse after coming home from securing food, which is a woman’s domain, to an abusive husband. The film highlights that the home and its safety is not for all women. While the lockdown sanctions men to laze around, it is the woman who has to bear the brunt of working both at home and work.

Today all of us have been fighting against COVID-19, a global catastrophic event, with a deterministic approach. Doctors, health workers, police, state machinery, frontline workers, key workers hidden in plain-sight: security guards and refuse collectors all in their efforts to save humanity from self-destruction are scripting a new social order: *Apart, yet together! We’ll get through this together!* In the midst of this mega-crisis, nothing but hope remains, which is revived repeatedly through TV ads, tik-tok videos and viral videos of celebrities washing dishes, doing the daily chores, doing work outs, and as if, suggesting that here is the golden chance to stay at home, to be at ease and to have some fun. Lockdown has been glamorised to such an extent that the crude realities of daily lives and existence have been overlooked.

Pandemics can be considered as “serial killers” having a global reach and devastating consequences on humans, social, political, and global economy. COVID-19 has brought the entire world to an eerie standstill. The partial and complete lockdown has brought with itself adverse effects on the existing societal order. According to Rebecca

Solnit, in theory, the virus does not discriminate as to whom it affects, yet how the society and the community deal with it have much to do with the pre-COVID existing political, economic, racial, and social order. The pandemic, along with the economic collapse, the resulting loss of jobs and low income, or, in some cases, no income has brought to the fore grim realities of the societies.

Previous epidemic events showed that communities that were already in existing vulnerable conditions were hit the hardest. If anything, the virus has intensified the existing disparities across race, class, colour, caste, and gender. According to a UN report, COVID-19 is expected to roll back the gains in gender equality efforts. With the impact on sectors ranging from health to individual protection, and owing to the differential needs of women and the demands on them, the virus affects girls and women differentially. According to ILO, 2.7 billion workers of 81% of the world's workforce are directly affected by the lockdown. With specific reference to India, 81% of the employed persons, make a living in the informal sector with only 6.5% in the formal sector and 0.8% in the household sector. Women in India make up 94% of the unorganised sectors which pay low wages and come without benefits such as maternal leave, sick pay, or pensions. Since women earn less and hence save less, such events of health crisis make women more vulnerable. Women also have the double burden of providing care work, which is mostly unpaid, unrecognised, and undervalued. COVID-19 has exacerbated the gender divide. "Work from home" option, the novel agenda of capitalism is a privilege for those in white-collar jobs and is certainly not feasible for women from informal sectors and nor for those who have the burden of providing care for an entire household. Moreover, as Das's film reflects, home is not a safety net for every section of the population. Maintaining a clean home and providing safety often comes from the sacrifices of women.

The continuous lockdown in India has sparked a debate amongst the domestic helps whose numbers range from 4.2 million to 50 million across the country. Girls and women who represent the majority of these numbers suffer, as the agenda of "working from home" is not a part of their job profile. Uneducated and hailing from the poorest sections of the society, these women have no rights and hence no protection and are mostly left at the benevolence of the workers who themselves are facing an economic crisis. Restricted mobility, dismissed without further notice, due payments, and with

little or no savings, these women face an unprecedented crisis. These women are left with “hungry children, abusive husbands, and landlords.” Examples of women living in constricted spaces with meagre meals, crisis of water, leave no space for them for sanitation or distance. A crisis like no other, it has also paved the way for stigma, discrimination, and eviction from “homes.” The stigma comes from the idea that since the workers live in clusters and in dingy spaces, they might be the potential carriers of the virus. A case of class elitism, it leaves the workers in even more vulnerable situations. The female migrant labourers who leave their homes and come to the metropolis with the hope of a better quality life are forced to evict their dwellings from the inability to pay rents. The idea of a safe home is at conflict in such situations. Further, due to the complete lockdown and the resulting shutdown of jobs like constructions, tailoring, artisans, street vendors, drivers, and the like, the families who are dependent on the wages of these domestic workers are concerned about making it through the virus. The cry of “social distancing” has come at the cost of the people of this sector’s income to survive.

Another significant crisis that has to be looked into is the emerging food insecurity. With the loss in wages, comes the inability to keep food on the table. Most children from these sections receive nutritiously and age-appropriate food from Anganwadi centres. Due to the closure of these centres and inadequate erratic supply, hundreds of children and pregnant women combat malnutrition, creating a further cause of worry.

Women comprise 70% of the workforce in the health sector and the fight against corona. According to a report by Amnesty International India, a typical day of an ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) worker begins at nine in the morning. Without any standard protective gear, these women work for over ten hours covering local communities and even containment zones. ASHA workers are community health workers who represent the first calls for health-related demands in rural and now in urban locations. In the battle against CORONA, these workers are “unarmed, unseen, and unheard.” Denied necessary protection and sanitation gears, for little pay (INR 2000-INR 3000) and incentives these women bring inaccessible health facilities to the communities by going door to door. For all the praise and glorification of health workers, the women of ASHA do not find themselves in situations of advantage.

Unrecognised under relevant labour laws, their demands and needs are not addressed. Shankari Pujari, secretary of Maharashtra ASHA discusses that though the government raised the wages of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers, ASHA failed to receive the benefits. Dependent on the city corporations, these workers await proper safety gears. Overburdened and underpaid, from being viewed as potential carriers of the virus, to being scorned and isolated from homes these women face additional problems.

Furthermore, due attention should be now paid to the need to design PPE for women. The healthcare workers contest that the PPEs designed to protect “both genders” are not conducive to the bodies of women. Worn for over twelve hours at a stretch and owing to the infection risks, unisex gears are not compatible with women whose bodies differ from men. Moreover, another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that women go through menstrual cycles, and uncomfortable bodysuits prevent them from working well.

The Coronavirus is truly a disaster for feminism. Not only has it highlighted the injustices, but it has also intensified gender inequality. The one factor that is common to women facing difficulties in these times is the heightened burden of care work. Care work is the meeting of physical, emotional, and psychological needs. Unpaid care work, which is commonly left out in policy agendas due to the conception that it is difficult to measure, is responsible for women’s inability to participate equally in the labour market, rendering them dependent and endangered. With the closure of offices, schools, and the shifting of children from paid care work (schools and nannies) to unpaid, entire families living under a single roof, it is women who take the hit. Time, which is a limited resource, is spent in providing care for the household by the woman. The more amount of time that a woman spends in unpaid labor is time spent less in developing vocational and employment skills. Apart from working in paid sectors, owing to the gender norms, women face a “double burden.” Across South Asia, men contribute the least amount of time, 31 minutes, i.e., 7.9% of the total working time to the care work. This data is a reflection of societies with family codes that place caregiving as a prerogative for women excluding men from contributing to care work and where women have little autonomy over their economic assets, there is little escape from this double shift.

According to UN Women, 4.5% single mothers in India run households. Women whose income are at stake and are without a support system have misery added to their plates. Furthermore, the women who test positive are isolated from their children which enhance their psychological trauma along with the already existing stress of job insecurity.

A direct implication of this situation is the burden on girls with household chores. From fetching water for sanitation purposes to cleaning, cooking, and serving food, her education comes under threat. A report by the World Bank Group speculates that owing to the tightening of the economic conditions girls could permanently be pulled out from school. If this happens, it is estimated that over 154 crores students in total would be affected. UNESCO's Stefania Giannini warns that dropout rates of girls in the world's least developed countries where education already comes at a price would entrench gender inequality in education. Moreover, the technological divide in Indian households where girls have limited access to gadgets could remove girls away from education rights.

The pandemic and the channelling of resources towards the larger health crisis leading to maternal and infant mortality, unmet needs for contraception, and hygiene products need to meet the demands of the reproductive health of women. Recent reports of a woman being turned away from the hospital due to the fear of "spreading the virus" expose the obstetric violence that the women of lesser privilege have to endure. Such episodes of stigma and discrimination in a medical setting curb the reproductive health rights of women. Though services like LaQshya and SUMAN aim to promote quality birth care, the grim reality is stark different. During COVID times, transport systems to reach a hospital, and getting admission is a matter of privilege. Left with little choice, women resort to home delivery, which is risky and is an alarming health concern. Over the decades, India has performed well in health indicators. However, the failure of the health system to ensure that each woman gets proper care regardless of her position in society would be a significant pitfall.

Another pandemic on the rise across the globe is the rise of violence behind closed doors. Recent data by National Commission for Women reveals 315 complaints of abuse in April 2021. Another report by NALSA documents 144 cases of violence in Uttarakhand and a significant rise in domestic violence in Haryana and Delhi. The



complaints range from girls being forced to marry to a wife fleeing her abusive husband. Previous accounts of pandemics reveal that domestic violence is a result of the manifestation of anxieties and frustrations owing to the crumbling societal order.

Furthermore, the loss of the spaces of escape owing to controlled mobility, the threat of contagion, income insecurity, and a general apprehension about the future make it next to impossible for women to escape their abusers. Moreover, some complaints do not even reach the helplines for women have limited access to communication services and not a conducive atmosphere to report those complaints as has been explored by Nandita Das’s film. The home and the family, which is considered safe during pandemics, become an arena where the woman is subjected to violence and exploitation. The spectrum of violence (emotional, verbal, and psychological) further suffocates the woman psychologically who is already overburdened with paid and unpaid work.

The motto of “Stay Safe, Stay Home” conflicts with the reality of those women whose homes are lost, displaced, unsafe, and spaces where their freedom is curbed. Those who suggest that great masterpieces were created during lockdowns need to be reminded that these creators were mostly privileged men whose needs were taken care of. It is paramount at this hour that the government brings in a gender-inclusive economic recovery response. From, the inclusion of care economy, through providing adequate reproductive health care to women, creating safe spaces for women who are victims of abuse, to registration of domestic workers and recognition of ASHA workers under relevant labour law, and maintaining food supplies, the state needs to engage in policies addressing the needs of women for they take the hit the most.

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## CHAPTER 16

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# A Mind Game and Survival: A Matrix of Religions and Health Systems<sup>\*</sup>

*Susheel Kumar Sharma*

### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the sources that create mental make-ups of different sets of people. It explores the interface between their religious/ ethical beliefs and health problems. Three groups of people have been identified: a) those who govern themselves by the literal interpretation of the scriptures and try to adhere to it at the cost of their lives b) those who interpret the text by going beyond the literal meaning of the text to take advantage of the latest knowledge in the field of medicines c) those who do not allow any scriptural knowledge to interfere in their ways of life and thinking. The third group tries to out manoeuvre the other two by adopting various pressure tactics and showing little respect for their freedom of faith/ religion, right to self-determination, human rights and free-will. Such persons get perplexed during the times of crisis when the science/ technology does not offer any solution. How to derive hope and live happily as during the days of epidemics and pandemics becomes problematic for them. The Hindus have had a traditional holistic life but in the modern nation-state that India is the Hindus are under tremendous pressure to change their ways in the name of rationality and science. (203 words)

*Keywords:* Ayurveda, Charak, Christian, Disease, Health, Hindu, COVID-19, Law, Medicine, Religion, Religious Freedom, Sushrut, Treatment.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One's normative life-style is generally shaped and decided by the religio-philosophical system that shape one's thoughts, beliefs and actions. Most of us inherit our beliefs and belief-systems from our parents and environs and a large number of people live with them peacefully without ever questioning them. In some cases, people are not allowed to question their belief-systems; any questioning,

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<sup>\*</sup> Earlier published: Sharma, Susheel Kumar. "Unlocking the Riddle of the Mind Game and Survival: A Matrix of Religions and Health Systems" *Literary Oracle* (ISSN: 2348-4772), III, 1 & 2(May-Dec 2020), pp. 114-156.

aberration, contrary opinion or behaviour is dealt with severely and various sorts of punishments are inflicted by (administrative) machinery controlled by the individuals, and the social, the political and the religious groups (with a strong soteriological background) by framing various kinds of codes, rules and laws. Those who acquire their beliefs (say from some books based on some sort of logic and rationality) generally keep on changing their life-style according to their newly acquired knowledge. In the process a chasm is created between the life styles of those who conform to their inherited beliefs and those who acquire them. Many a times a conflict leading to a power struggle between these two groups too starts. This is how societies across the world have emerged over a period of time. Medical systems too are a by-product of the societal organization and do not remain untouched by their places of origin and the surroundings. An insight into the belief systems will enable a psychologist and medical researcher to understand why some people survive even without taking medicines and some die even when best medical facilities are provided. Therefore, for a health worker in the area of Health Promotion it is imperative to look into various belief-systems. Owing to the limitation of time and space I intend to ruminate on the matrix of religions and health systems in the Western hemisphere which has largely been organised on the basis of Judeo-Christian-Islamic wisdom and Indian society which is largely organised on Upanishadic wisdom. A religion and a health system intersect at the following three points: a) why does a body suffer from some illness? b) what can be done to bring an ill body to its normal state? and c) how to live with illness. The study in the coming paragraphs will be confined to these three issues only.

## **2. METHOD**

The study is a theoretical analysis of the data related to the human beings suffering from various kinds of ailments related to their physical and mental well-being. The data is largely drawn from the reported cases in various public domains like the books, journals, newspapers and social media. The study is basically designed to understand the choices of the treatments adopted by persons suffering from different ailments. A correlation between the sufferers' mental make-ups based on their religious background and the adopted ways and methods is being explored. A comparative and analytical approach is followed to understand various involved issues

and arrive at the correlation and the conclusion. The limitation of the study is that the data only from the secondary sources has been taken into account. However, the findings are not likely to change with the corrections in the data at micro-level.

### 3. THE STUDY

#### 3.1 Judeo-Christian-Islamic Beliefs

In the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, sickness is defined as a curse and the cause of one's sickness is told to be the sin committed by Adam: "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned." (Romans 5:12) and the subsequent sins committed by an individual: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (James 5:16); "There is no health in my bones because of my sin." (Psalm 38:3) and "I will bring such distress on all people that they will grope about like those who are blind, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like dung." (Zephaniah 1:17) In the terminology of modern science it can be described as Genetic disorder or deformity. *The Bible* talks about three major curses, one each upon serpent, woman, and man but none of these curses is about illness or pestilences. The curse on the serpent is being ignored here as the paper deals with the health systems for human beings only. Woman/Eve was cursed with "pains in childbearing, painful labour, a desire for husband and his rule over her." (Genesis 3:16) None of these is about suffering due to physical ill-health or sickness. Similarly, man/ Adam was cursed with "painful toil" (Genesis 3:17, 5:29); again, there is no reference to suffering owing to sickness. Adam and Eve supposedly enjoyed perfect health before they transgressed God's commandment. In the Old Testament the blessings for obedience to the Lord and the curses for disobedience have been listed and described. These curses include both the physical and mental ailments like weakness, fever, inflammation, infection, cuts (from a sword), boils, tumours, eczema, scabies, madness, all types of the diseases in a country (Egypt in this case) and every kind of sickness and plague, blindness, confusion of mind, great and long-lasting afflictions and severe, enduring illnesses. However, there is hardly any cure if a body suffers on account of some Genetic disorder in the medical sciences as they stand today; some of the associated signs and symptoms can just be managed.

The argument made by the believers in this tradition is very simple: if nothing on the earth happens without God's permissive Will a person neither gets sick without His will nor can s/he be cured without it (His permission). Again, if any kind of sickness is a curse from God only God should be able to cure it. *The Bible* records instances where God uses illness (or even death) as a means of punishment in His judgment. For example, a death penalty has been suggested for making a sacrifice to a god other than Yahweh (Exodus 22:20) and for indulging in premarital intercourse (Deuteronomy 22:13–21); “The Lord sent a pestilence on Israel from that morning until the appointed time; and seventy thousand of the people died” (2 Samuel 24:15) In other words, it can be said that sickness is a result of the failure to connect with the Lord or the absence of “right thinking” that could have led to the connection. In such a situation prayer is the best solution and perhaps the easiest way to seek pardon, to fall in line and to cure the suffering person. An assurance to this effect has also been given in the Old Testament: “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.” (Exodus 15:26) Similarly, Exodus (23:25) says that sickness will be taken away if one served the Lord and Deuteronomy (7:12, 15) says that sickness will be taken away as a result of obeying the Lord and James (5:16) extols the power of confession and prayers in getting healed. In the *Bible*, there are several verses and instances that celebrate the power of faith: faith can move mountains; “It is faithful, not foolish, to believe God can heal physically today. Jesus loves the whole person, soul and body,” writes Nick Charalambous. (newspring.cc/)

### 3.2 Christian Faith and Miracles

“The diseases of the Middle Ages, so far as we can get vague and unsatisfactory glimpses of them, were predominantly hunger, languor, and poverty of blood, the emaciation men admire in mediæval sculpture. The blood was thin as water, and scrofulous complaints were bound to be all but universal. With the exception of Arab or Jewish physicians, hired at great cost by the rich, medical treatment was unknown,—the people could only crowd to the church doors for aspersion with holy water. On Sundays, after Mass, the sick came in scores, crying for help, —and words were all they got: “You have sinned, and God is afflicting you. Thank him;

you will suffer so much the less torment in the life to come. Endure, suffer, die. Has not the Church its prayers for the dead?" (Michelet np)

If administering some pain alleviating treatment to Christian women suffering from labour pain is a violation of God's commandment and is to be considered an interference in His plan has been a point of debate amongst Christians. (Pfeiffer 41) During the Medieval period many a healer-women who helped pregnant women by giving some medicinal-herbs for relieving pain during child birth were declared witches by the Inquisition and were subsequently punished severely. (Climo, Ehrenreich and English, Kingsley and Clement, Ostling)

Healing the sick without any medicines was one of the major activities of Jesus. He is said to have cured people suffering from both from mental and physical sickness and physical deformities since birth and also those which were acquired later<sup>1</sup>. Reading these stories of the *Bible* and meditating on them is a part and parcel of the Christian believers in the weekly Sabbath day prayers and activities. Therefore, the simple solution for curing patients in the *Bible* is based on faith: "...call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over [the patient], anointing [him/ her] with oil in the name of the Lord." (James 5:14)

The miracles in the Christian tradition are attributed not only to Jesus but also to the (fe)male saints and those who are to be canonized as saints<sup>2</sup> even today. There are reports of such miracles being performed by the "Saints in waiting" and their acts are also monitored by the Church. In this connection Tara Isabella Burton writes: "Within the Catholic tradition, the idea that saints can intercede to God on one's behalf makes saints particularly important and the object of folkloric veneration in their own right." (vox.com) The miracles are mostly associated with interceding on behalf of the sick persons and curing them.

The reports of getting cured by having faith in a particular person or in a sect and saying prayers to them in a particular way are available not only in the ancient or the medieval sources but also in the current ones. Getting cured by having faith in a particular person or a sect and offering prayers to them is a belief prevalent in the days of Post-modernism and Post-truth as well. To exemplify the point the case of Oscar Romero (1917–1980), the Salvadoran archbishop associated with social justice and progressive theology, who was beatified as a martyr in 2015 and later canonized in 2018 may be cited. In Romero's case, the miracle was the healing of Salvadoran



woman Cecilia Marabel Flores, whose husband prayed for Romero's intercession when Cecilia had life-threatening complications from a caesarean section in 2015. (voanews.com, apnews.com, osvnews.com) Similar is the story of Mariam Thresia (1876 –1926) an Indian Syro-Malabar Catholic, the founder of the Congregation of the Holy Family, who was beatified on 9 April 2000 and canonized on 13 October 2019. The miracle before beatification involved curing of Mathew D. Pellissery, born with congenital club feet in 1956. He was doubly healed as his both right and left feet were straightened during sleep on the night of 21 August 1970 and 28 August 1971 respectively after several days of fasting and prayer by the whole family, invoking the help of Mariam Thresia. Her second miracle (needed to become a saint) was again related to the cure of an infant called Christopher who recovered from acute respiratory distress syndrome after his family prayed for Mariam Thresia's intercession by placing her relic near the baby in 2009. The act of healing received approval from the medical board in Rome in March 2018 and theologians later confirmed it in October 2018. (timesofindia) The practice of canonization is not limited only to Roman Catholics but extends to other denominations like Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Anglican Church and Lutheran Church. The common characteristic in the process of canonization among all the above referred to churches is to find some miracles attributable to the venerable candidate. The miracle is generally there in the form of healing a sick man in the likeness of Jesus. One should not presume that healing by faith is a practiced only by the saints or those venerated to be saints. Rather it is practiced in other denominations as well and is increasingly becoming popular. Healing with the help of the Holy Spirit has traditionally been a pivotal theme in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches throughout the world.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Data Classification & Analysis**

#### ***4.1.1 Western Hemisphere***

There is a lot of debate on the issue of seeking the help of the doctors to cure one's ailments among various religious groups including those amongst the Christians. The ailing individual's exclusive dependence on a venerated soul for getting healed and his/her going to some venerated person alongside taking medical help for

a cure are two different attitudes depending on the intensity of faith of the sufferer. Based on their faith and beliefs the people can broadly be divided into two groups: those who are believers and those who are non-believers or atheists. The believers have two categories. Thus, in all there are three groups viz. two of the believers and one of the non-believers:

*Group 1): The Perfect Believers Who Shun A Doctor*

The first group consists of those persons who have complete faith and are dependent on prayers alone; such people shun doctors altogether as they believe that medical care is not needed by them. The Victorian poet Alfred Tennyson echoes their sentiments very well: “More things are wrought by prayer/ Than this world dreams of.” (Tennyson, ll. 247-48) In their mental process accepting medical treatment will show a lack of faith in God and His sovereignty over healing. In other words, the word of God (as comes through the Church/ Bible) is more important for them than the word of a doctor. This practice has been continuing perhaps since the emergence of Christianity itself. There are several modern churches (collectively called Neo-charismatic or Third-wave charismatic or Hypercharismatic Movement)<sup>3</sup> that discourage or forbid members from seeing the doctors (see infra). Many Christians refuse to see doctors, thinking that their religious faith through prayer or other rituals will stimulate a divine presence and divine energy to heal the sufferer. For example, it has been reported in the Guardian on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016 that the parents of the sect called *The Followers of Christ* refuse to take medical help for their children in the name of Christ despite alarming child mortality rates among these groups. (theguardian) Similarly, Martin Lindhardt in his book has recorded the testimonies of several such persons who instead of taking medicines are dependant exclusively on faith and prayers. It shall not be out of place to reproduce one such testimony from Lindhardt’s book: “Why would I go to see a ‘worldly’ doctor? The Lord created us, he saved us, he knows us better than anyone, and he will cure us. I don’t like the doctors. He [Jesus] died for my sake! So who could cure me better than him?” (Lindhardt 87) This person went for a spiritual surgery instead of bodily surgery and was cured. Similarly, the Global Medical Research Institute (GMRI) has been documenting “evidenced-based testimonies from various ministries applying rigorous methods of research to show the effects of proximal

intercessory prayer (PIP) in the resolution of conditions that would typically have a poor prognosis otherwise.” (globalmri.org) One of their documented stories has been reported in a peer-reviewed journal (*Explore*) under the title: “Case report of instantaneous resolution of juvenile macular degeneration blindness after proximal intercessory prayer”. (j.explore.2020.02.011) It is about an 18-year-old female who suddenly developed bilateral vision loss and was diagnosed with juvenile macular degeneration and had been blind for twelve years. She was instantaneously healed after her husband prayed for her. Her eyesight has remained 20/40 or better for over forty years since the proximal intercessory prayer (PIP) event. Similarly, the followers of the denominations like the Word of Faith Movement (WOFM) and Christian Science (CS) often do not wish to consult a doctor as it shall be construed as a display of the lack of faith (see *supra*). The followers of these Churches hold that doubting the grace of God acts as a barrier to using the spiritual energy given to them to heal themselves (CS) and prevents God from healing the sick (WOFM). In medical terms it may be explained as the mind has a control over body and not the vice-versa. Thus, by increasing their mental strength they believe to cure a sick body. A large number of Yoga practitioners like B.K.S. Iyengar, David Frawley, Ina Stephens, John Scott, Naveen Varshneya, Phulgenda Sinha and Samprasad Vinod also claim to cure so many diseases only by sustained meditation.

In terms of numbers, this group has a very large chunk of people. Claudia Kalb reports that according to a 2004 Newsweek poll, 72 percent of Americans believed that praying to God can cure someone, even if science says the person has an incurable disease. (Kalb 44-50, 53-4, 56) During these days of democracy even science cannot afford to be dictatorial in its attitude. Therefore, it is at times guided by the numbers which is a sort of empirical evidence. Candy Gunther Brown who has studied PIP meetings for healing in economically backward rural Mozambique, justifies her research-stand saying: “If empirical research continues to indicate that PIP may be therapeutically beneficial, then -- whether or not the mechanisms are adequately understood -- there are ethical and nonpartisan public policy reasons to encourage further related research. ... It is a primary privilege and responsibility of medical science to pursue a better understanding of therapeutic inventions that may advance global health, especially in contexts where

conventional medical treatments are inadequate or unavailable.” (eurekalert.org, Brown 864-9)

The sudden rise of faith healers or divine healers and rapid growth of the believers in the gospel in the modern age has led to certain doubts too. Their unusual expansion is attributed to some extraneous considerations like costly medical treatment and fear of side-effects as well as is clear from the following opinion: “[Faith Healing] is a deceptively easy trap to fall into. Medical help is expensive. Injuries and deaths caused by malpractice are tragic enough to become scintillating topics of discussion. It’s tempting to feed a fear of doctors, and trust in warm thoughts that Jesus will heal.” (compellingtruth.org) Some others may be afraid of the side effects of the medicines, particularly in allopathic system. [personal interaction with certain persons] Some others know that drugs are constantly being developed and they may involuntarily be used as guinea pigs for the drug-trials. [personal interaction with certain persons] So they shy away from them. Many of the allopathic and homeopathic medicines have their origins in various animals which vegans and vegetarians do not take. [personal interaction with certain persons] This group also faces various kinds of criticisms that I shall be discussing later in this paper.

*Group 2: The Believers Who Approach A Doctor*

In this group fall those who have faith in worshipping the Lord but are not dependent on prayers alone; such people also go to the doctors and follow their advice partly or fully depending on certain interpretations of the Biblical/ canonical verses. “In a statement, Bethel said its church community believes in God’s ability to heal supernaturally, but ‘we also deeply value and access medical professionals’.” (qtd. by Boorstein) A doctor treats, God heals – is the slogan of the people in this group. “I am a Christian and believe that God gave us Medicine. Prayer works in ALL situations. I also believe that God can heal. The two work hand in hand,” opines Suzanne. (pbs.org/wnet/) Another person, Eunice, holds almost a similar opinion:

“[S]eeking a medical doctor isn’t bad...nothing will happen. Praying that everything goes well with treatment is better than praying with no treatment, however, that doesn’t mean that i [sic] don’t believe that children can still be healed by the touch of G-d [sic], He still can, but children or anyone for that matter shouldn’t be put at risk, they should still seek medical help.” (pbs.org/wnet/)

At times even the timing to consult a doctor is decided by the religious head as is clear from the following observation:

“Mostly, I first consult my pastor on my health issues before taking it to the hospital upon his recommendation. I do so for the purpose of ascertaining the origin of the sickness, it be natural or spiritually-motivated. At times some diseases are not natural but originate from various external sources such as witchcraft, ancestors and curse which need to be tackled through spiritual means. Also, he [healer] is the leader who is leading us in diverse ways, including both physical and spiritual, therefore consulting faith first is the right thing to do. Also, I have faith that I will be healed by God through him. If he says I should seek formal healthcare then I go, if he says I would be healed through faith, I believe so.” (Peprah)

This group believes that the Bible is not against one’s taking the help of doctors or medicines to cure oneself. In the *Bible* a healer (doctor) and medicines are presented in a positive light as is evident from the following: the physicians are called Joseph’s “servants” (Genesis 50:2); God describes Himself as a “healer” (Exodus 15:26), a word that also describes a physician; and the effect of medicine is described as “good like a medicine” (Proverbs 17:22) In other examples, Gilead approves of physicians (Jeremiah 8:22), equates the lack of medicine with a lack of healing (Jeremiah 30:13) and medicine is told to be the means of healing Babylon (Jeremiah 51:8). This group of people takes inspiration from Luke, who was a physician (Colossians 4:14) and one of the writers of the gospels. All the above discussion indicates that healers and medicines have been approved of in the *Bible*. The only point of debate between the first group and this one is if God Himself is the healer why human intervention should be sought at all. Seeking help from a human agency is viewed by the faith holders as not showing complete and unfledged faith in God/Jesus/Lord. However, this group of believers hold that God wants human intelligence to be used. They controvert the opponents by advancing the following argument: God created Adam as an intelligent being; as he did not use his intelligence with care, he fell prey to the Devil’s temptations but Jesus used it with love, care and caution to overcome temptations. The intelligence and knowledge of a doctor are the gifts of God and are to be used carefully. It can very well be assumed that God has given the doctor the required intelligence and ability to create medicines for repairing human/animal bodies as a sign of His love and compassion.

This group further maintains that Christ has nowhere disapproved of medicines or physicians. On the contrary he gave legitimacy to the medicines and the doctors when he said: “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick” (Luke 5:31). Jesus also quoted from the proverb, “Physician, heal yourself!” (Luke 4:23) There are many verses in the *Bible* that suggest that medicinal tools are an important part of God’s purpose. These verses speak of using “medical treatments” such as applying bandages (Ezekiel 34:16), a poultice for boil (2 Kings 20:7), oil and wine (Luke 10:34), various kinds of tree leaves (Revelation 22:2), the tree of healing in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:1–5) and “balm of Gilead” (Jeremiah 46:11). In the Genesis (17:10-14) the Lord commands the procedure of circumcision to Abraham. On the basis of the above cited and such other verses people/ Churches in this group are convinced that there is nothing against the medicines, the doctors and the hospitals in the *Bible* rather a medical treatment has been viewed favourably in the text. Various Churches/ Congregations run a large number of popular hospitals and well-known medical colleges. Unless they sincerely believe that healing comes from God, that medical science is a gift from God and that doctors’ skill is a blessing that God has bestowed on us for our good, they cannot run the hospitals and the medical colleges. Even though medical knowledge is praised as a gift from God for the benefit of people a caution of “not to depend on men alone” is given: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.” (Jeremiah 17:5) The medicines, therefore, should only be treated as other physical gifts like air, water and food for human sustenance, hold the people in this group.

It may be argued that if sickness is to be cured only by doctors there should be no need for any prayers. This argument is controverted by this group on the basis of the following two Biblical verses: “You do not have because you do not ask God.” (James 4:2) and “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray.” (James 5:13) From these verses it is clear that a man is supposed to seek God’s intervention in any physical difficulty though it is not promised that God will answer the way one wants. However, God being gracious, compassionate and rich in love one has the assurance that one’s best interest will be protected. As indicated above the doctors’ intelligence and medicines are to be viewed as God’s compassionate gifts to bring healing and recovery to humanity. No wonder, the hospitals run by

Christian Missionaries all over the world are rated very highly. No wonder, a large number of Christians advocate the use of both prayers and medicines simultaneously. For example, Abby H. Abildness in her *Healing Prayer and Medical Care* writes: “Having been in healthcare and ‘God-care’ for the past for the past 30 years, I value healthcare and God care and want to see a responsible balance so that the way of treating the body, mind, and spirit would bring healing to the whole person and their family life.” (Preface, np) Similarly, Rich Deem in his “Prayer and Faith vs. Doctors and Medicine” argues that “Christians should not rely solely upon prayer to treat diseases that are reliably treated through modern medicine.” (godandscience.org) This group, therefore, logically believes that all healing comes from God and He often uses medicine to accomplish His healing. Hence, they justify the use of prayer along with medicines.

As indicated above, the people of this group follow the doctor’s advice while sticking to their faith. However, one should not presume that this group is a very homogeneous group and all of them pray and abide by a doctor’s advice completely. The followers of Jehovah’s Witnesses, who have their presence in about 250 countries, for example, take the restrictions on “eating blood” (Genesis 9:4, Deuteronomy 12:23, Acts 15: 20) so seriously that they refuse to accept a doctors’ advice on blood transfusions because of which even operations have to be averted sometimes. (brewminate.com) A Catholic patient seeks anointing and confession before an operation even if (s)he deteriorates. (newtheologicalmovement) Fasting for religious reasons and practising sacred customs (e.g. Latter-day Saints hold regular fast days, usually on the first Sunday of each month during which neither food nor drink is taken) are observed against the advice of doctors (e.g. monitored diet to manage insulin). Voluntary patients of Christian Scientists accept conventional, though minimal medical treatment while the involuntary patients wish to be free of the conventional medical treatments and be transferred to a place where they can be looked after accordingly to their own religious convictions. Christian Scientists would not normally wish to receive or donate organs. Some independent churches reject medicine because of the connection between Greek medical terms and pagan gods and myths. (compellingtruth.org) The fact however remains that the scripture nowhere commands Christians to avoid doctors or medicine, to refuse blood transfusions,

inoculations and surgery; also, to look for them in an ancient text, when all these modern medical procedures were non-existent, is nothing less than absurd.

The apparent connections between God, faith and the body have been studied and discussed by the epidemiologist and medical school professor Jeff Levin by his book *God, Faith, and Health*. He uses the term "theosomatic medicine" to describe this relationship. He has advanced seven principles of theosomatic medicine:

1. Religious affiliation and membership promote healthy behaviour and lifestyles.
2. Regular religious fellowship reduces the ill-effects of stress and isolation.
3. Participation in worship and prayer create the physiologic effects of positive emotions.
4. Religious beliefs are like health-promoting beliefs and personality styles.
5. Religious faith promotes the thoughts of hope, optimism and positive expectation.
6. Mystical experiences activate a healing bioenergy or altered state of consciousness.
7. Absent prayer for others heals by paranormal means (divine intervention). (pp.13, 14)

Janet Susan Hickman in her study agrees with the above study and conclusions of Levin.

### *Group 3: Science Matters More*

This group consists of those who draw a line between religious faith and science as they believe that there is no common intersection between these two spheres of life. They go by the doctors' advice without any interference from the religious texts/leaders. When such people ignore their religious line/life they behave like either atheists or secular-progressives. Such people do not allow their religious faith to influence/meddle in their scientific ways of medical treatment. Such people are quite large in numbers in the present-day academia; they are influential opinion makers and they hold key positions in the society. They disregard the existence and opinions of the earlier two groups (see supra). They take pride in describing the present age as scientific age and their contemptuous attitude towards others



indicates their vanity, haughtiness and arrogance. Justice R A Jahagirdar is very cautious about such attitude and tries to pre-empt any criticism by writing: "... it is a mistake to call this age or for that matter any age as a scientific age. Nor is a particular society entitled to be called a scientific society to the exclusion of others. As archaeology, ethnology, history and sociology have demonstrated, man in every society has a certain amount of scientific knowledge." (Jahagirdar 3).

## 4.1.2 Eastern Hemisphere

### 4.1.3 *The Case Of India*

The Article 51 A(h) of *The Constitution of India* enjoins upon the Indian citizens to have a sense of scientific temper<sup>4</sup>. The matrix of religion and medicine becomes even more complicated in a country like India which boasts of living and marching forward with an inheritance of the most ancient civilization, believed to be at least 5000-year-old. Though India is a land that has patronised various sects and faiths I shall be discussing only about those that are indigenous to this land. Such people call themselves Hindus though the *Constitution* does not define of the term "Hindu". As the word "Hindu" is largely considered to be an exonym and an umbrella term, the Hindus prefer the term *Sanatana Dharma* ("the eternal way") to describe their way of life. It defies all the narrow traditional features of any religion or creed. It has been accepted as the oldest surviving religion in the world, which unlike Abrahamic faith systems, has multiple books, prophets (*avatar*), gods, prayers and prayer rituals, rites or performances, images (*vigraha*) for worship and reverence, philosophical concepts, paths to liberation (*Moksha*) and the like. The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly observed: "When we think of the Hindu religion, we find it difficult, if not impossible, to define Hindu religion or even adequately describe it. ... It may broadly be described as a way of life and nothing more." (1966 AIR 1119, 1976 (Sup) SCR 478, 1995 AIR 2089, 1996 AIR 1113) The best description of a Hindu's way of life is: "a constant engagement to shed one's ignorance and pettiness" ("हीनं दुष्यति इति हिन्दू" *hinam dushyati iti hindu Sabdakalpadruma: 537*). Mahatma Gandhi adds some more dimensions to its meaning: "Hinduism ... has no official creed. ... If I were asked to define the Hindu creed I should simply say: search after Truth through non-violent means. ... Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after truth ... . Of course, therefore, Hinduism is the most tolerant

of all religions. Its creed is all-embracing.” (Gandhi 1) Hindus do not subscribe to inherent sinful nature of man nor do they consider (wo)men to under some curse/ punishment. On the contrary they consider themselves (irrespective of gender) to be “brahma”: *Aham Brahmasmi* (“I am Brahma/ Divine” or “I’m the eternal part of the Supreme” (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 1.4.10 of the *Yajur Veda*). The human beings do not have any special place in Hindu cosmology/ world view; they are as (un)important creatures and parts of the entire Consciousness as any other creature is. Since there is wide chasm between the above concept of a Hindu and a modernised Hindu who has come under the influence of Macaulay’s education<sup>5</sup> I shall strictly be going by the Hindu religious texts.

The Indians have a very well-developed indigenous system of health science because Hindus attach the same value to a living human body as a scientist attaches to his equipment. The study/ science of human body and its relation with entire cosmology is popularly known as Ayurveda. It is regarded as a sub-veda (*Upaveda*) of *Atharva Veda*. It is also called *Panchama Veda* (5th Veda). Maharishi Charak defines Ayurveda as follows: something that bestows the knowledge about *ayu* is *ayurveda* (*tadaayurveda yateetyaayurvedah, Charaka Sambita, Sutra Sthan* 30: 23). At another place it is defined as the treatise which describes *Hita ayu* (favourable to life), *Ahit ayu* (adverse to life), *Sukh ayu* (healthy life) and *dukh ayu* (diseased state) (*Hitabitam sukham dukhamayustasya hitbitam. Manam cha tachecha yatraoktamayurvedah sa uchhyatell Charaka Sambita, Sutra Sthan* 1:41) Ayurveda deals with good, bad, blissful and sorrowful life and what is wholesome and unwholesome for it, longevity and about what *ayu* (life) is in itself. The word Ayurveda consists of two morphemes viz. *ayu* and *veda*. According to *Charak Sambita* the union of body (*Shareera*), sense organs (*Indriya*), mind (*Sattva*) and soul (*Atma*) is called *Ayu* (*sarirendriya satvatma samyogo, Charak Sambita, Sutra Sthana* 1: 42) and the word ‘Veda’ means knowledge. Hence, *Ayurveda* means the knowledge of the union of body, sense organs, mind and soul. Ayurveda consists of the following eight branches of knowledge: General Medicine (*Kayachikitsa*), Diseases of eye, ear, nose and throat (*Shalakya*), Surgery (*Shalyatantra*), Toxicology (*Agadatantra/ Visha Chikitsa*), Paranormal Science / Psychotherapy (*Bhoot vidya*), Obstetrics, Gynaecology & Paediatrics (*Kaumarbhritya*), Rejuvenation/ Anti-ageing treatment (*Rasayana*) and Reproductive sciences or sexual vitality (*Vajikarana*). (*Charak Sambita, Sutra Sthana* 30: 28, *Ashtang*

*Hridayam, Sutra Sthana 1:5-6*<sup>6</sup> This branch of Indian knowledge is patronised by the government and people along with modern systems of medical knowledge like Allopathy and Homeopathy.

#### 4.1.4 Karma

What binds different denominations (like Shaivism, Shaktism, Smartism Vaishnavism, Saurism and others) of the Hindus and the different sects of Indian origin (like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Arya Samaj, Mahima Dharma, Prarthana Samaj and others) together is the acceptance and belief in the following three doctrines: the doctrines of i) action (*Karma*) ii) rebirth (*punarjannm*) and iii) liberation (*Moksha*). To my mind these are also the necessary and sufficient conditions to call and identify a Hindu. There are three parameters to decide the worthiness of an act (*Karma*). The first one has been suggested by Gandhi very succinctly as: “a relentless pursuit after truth” (Gandhi: 1). Secondly, the Hindus believe that every human being is indebted to five sources for his/her survival. Therefore, s/he should contribute to one’s fulfilling the aspirations expressed in terms of five ethical and spiritual debts (*Shatpath Brahmana: 1.7.2.1-6*) that a person should strive to repay in one’s life-time. So each action of a person should be directed towards an effort to repay at least one of the following five debts: indebtedness to the sages (*rishi rin ऋषि ऋण*), indebtedness to the ancestors (*pitra rin पितृ ऋण*), indebtedness to the deities (*deva rin देव ऋण*), indebtedness to humanity (*manushya rin मनुष्य ऋण*) and indebtedness to the objects of nature like plants and animals (*bhuta rin भूत ऋण*). The third parameter to judge the value and validity of an action is that it should be performed for the fulfilment of at least one of the four proper goals/aims (*puruṣārtha पुरुषार्थ*) of life: righteousness/ moral values (*Dharma धर्म*), prosperity/ economic values, passion/ love/ psychological values and happiness/ spiritual value. All these four values are independent as well as inter-dependent.

#### 4.1.5 Karmaphala And Sickness

The Hindus believe that “There is no one who can remain without performing an action (*karma*) even for a moment. Indeed, all beings are compelled to act by their qualities born of material nature (the three *guṇas*).” (*Bhagavadgita* 3: 5) The action (*karma*) includes movement of our (physical) bodies as well as the (mental/

metaphysical) movement of our thoughts. The word *karma* (action) refers to the results of past actions, present actions, and actions that one will perform in the future. The *karmas* of the past, present and future are called *Sanchita Karma* (the accumulated past actions, genetic coding to use modern terminology), *Prarabdha* (the effect of a past action in the present time) and *Kriyamana Karma* (that which is being done; current action) and *Agami* (आगामी कर्म the future actions that result from one's present actions). Thus, there are four types of actions (*karma*). The effect of an action is also *Karma*, because every effect becomes a cause in itself. While *Sanchita Karma* and *Agami Karma* are latent (*sukhma*), *Prarabdha* and *Kriyamana Karmas* are gross (*sthula*). The effect of an action is also *Karma*, because every effect becomes a cause in itself. *Karma* is one of the six causative factors (along with *Samanya*, *Vishesha*, *Dravya*, *Guna* and *Samavaya Karanas*) for the whole universe. (*Charaka Sambhita, Sutra Sthana 1: 52*)<sup>7</sup> Ayurveda, the Hindu science of health, says that the health of a body is governed by all these four types of *karma*. For example, having a good or bad diet (*Kriyamana Karma*) affects a body positively or negatively; a new born baby's weak health<sup>8</sup> (*sanchita karma*) because of the poor diet of his/her mother is his/her *prarabdha*. Similarly, if proper medication is done the health of the child may improve (*Agami karma*).

*Ashtanga Samgraha* classifies diseases as Primary diseases (*Anubandhya*) and Secondary diseases (*Anubandhas*). *Anubandh* diseases (Primary diseases) are further classified as i) diseases due to bad act of previous life (*Purva*) and ii) complications (*Upadrava*). Diseases caused by the present acts (*pratiuttapan/ Kriyamana karma*) of this human body (*sharira*) are known as *pratiuttapan karmaj* while those caused by the effect of the bad acts (*karma*) of the past life are known as *Purvakarmaj*. *Hinayoga, Mithyayoga and Atiyoga* of *Karma* are the root causes of vitiation of *Dosha*. (see Rogbhediya Adhyay, Sutrasthana chapter 22, *Ashtanga Samgraha*, Vol I).

There is no action/deed performed in the previous life/past time which does not lead to the corresponding results. The Hindus, thus, believe that a disease is a result of one's karma, not somebody else's sin. Diseases arising out of such actions/deeds are not amenable to any therapeutic measures<sup>9</sup>. Crawford writes that Charaka "allows room for human efforts to curtail the effects of ordinary non-moral actions by the use of intelligence, wisdom, balanced conduct, and recourse to medicine. Only the fruits of immensely good or bad

moral actions cannot be averted by these means.” (Crawford: 111) Therefore, a Hindu is not averse to taking medicines and improving one’s condition and life-style though he considers sickness to be a punishment (*karma danda कर्म-दंड*) for his *karma* which is the net result (*karma phal कर्म-फल*) of his *karma* from which there is no escape. The Hindus thus believe that a disease is a result of one’s own *karma*, not somebody else’s sin. This also explains as to why one person is affected by a virus and the other is not. In terms of modern science, one has developed immunity while others have not because of a combination of various *karmanas*. Therefore, if one falls ill despite following the regimens of diet and season the illness could be attributed to *karmanas* of the previous life<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, one, who is desirous of one’s wellbeing in the present life and life after birth, should suppress urges of impulsive action of *Kaya, Vake and Manas*.<sup>11</sup>

Different societies may prescribe different punishments for the same kind of illegality/ sinfulness according to their backgrounds and different points of view. For example, a crime/ sin like homicide attracts different punishments in different countries. As indicated earlier, the Hindus consider a disease to be a kind of punishment for an undesirable act/ sin in this or in past life. The Hindus do not consider/treat/deal with a body/ disease in isolation. Rather, one’s present body is considered to be reflecting the *samskars* of the past lives as well. Because of this unique thought a peculiar way of punishment too has been spelled out for what is considered to be bad/sin/sinful. A detailed discussion about them is found mainly in *Sbatatapa Sambita, Manusmriti* and *Garuda Purana*. For example, it is written in *Sbatatapa Sambita*:

“A sin, committed in a previous birth, assails people in the shape of a disease after the termination of the sufferings in a hell. It is dissipated by recitation etc., (5) Leprosy, consumption, gonorrhoea, diarrhoea, obstruction in urination, stone, cough, dysentery, fistula, obstinate ulcers, inflammation of the glands, paralysis, loss of eyes, these diseases, says the *Smriti* originate from the perpetration of heinous crimes. (6-7) Dropsy, liver, spleen, colic, ulcer, short-breathing, dyspepsia, fever, cold, forgetfulness, distraction of the senses, *Galagraba* (a kind of disease), bloody tumour, dry spreading itch, are the diseases begotten of minor sins; convulsive fits, appearance of circular figures of various sizes on the body, trembling of the body, itches, elephantiasis [*sic*], *Poondarika* (a kind of leprosy), and other diseases, originate from *Unupata*-sins. The diseases of mankind, heard by [the name of] piles, originate from *Atipapa* (heinous crimes). (8-10) Various other diseases originate from the combination of

sins. Their symptoms and penitentiary rites should be spoken of in due order. (11)” (Dutt 459-460)

Some of the above ideas are also a part of the *Ayurveda*. For example, Mahrishi Charaka holds that the cause of dermitosis (like Leucoderma) lies not only in having incompatible foods but also in untruthfulness, ungratefulness, having no respect for the gods, insulting peers like brahmin / guru and other respected personal, sinful acts, and misdeeds of past life. (*Charaka Sambhita, Chikitsasthana*, 7: 8, 7:177)<sup>12</sup> Similarly, epidemics are caused by vitiated factors like air, water and land because of people’s sins of the present life or the misdeeds of the past life, intellectual error (*prajnaparadha*), unrighteousness (*Adharma*) and the curses of the sages (*Charaka Sambhita, Vimana Sthana*, 3: 19-23).

The Hindus consider *Moksha* to be the ultimate purpose of human life and the efforts for attaining *moksha* can be made only in human life. Therefore, *karmaphala* is not limited to suffering from certain diseases only even a re-birth in any other form (*yoni*) is a result of sin. Taking birth in any other *yoni* is a greater suffering or the worse form of disease. *Ushna Sambhita* mentions: “Those twice-borns, who take meals at a *S’rddha*, if they, without spending a night, hold sexual congress or make gifts, are, forsooth, born in the species of crows. (30)” (p. 229) Similarly, in Goswami Tulsidas’s *Shriramcharitmanas*, a Hindu religio-literary epic, there is a conversation between Kaag Bhushund and Garuda (*Uttarkand, Doha* 120 ff). In it the readers are being advised to shun criticizing and talking ill of others unnecessarily. In the process *karma* (action/ sin) and its *Karmaphala* (result) are mentioned: “those who criticise their teacher will be reborn as frogs”; “those who criticise saints are reborn as owls”; and the “foolish people who criticize and talk ill about everyone shall be reborn as bats.” (*Uttarkand*, 120: 12-14) Tulsidas also mentions the causes of various diseases: “The root of all diseases is attachment, infatuation and ignorance”; “The *Kama* is *Vata*, greed is immense phlegm and anger is *Pitta* which is the reason for burning in the chest”; “If these three brothers viz. *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* unite, painful diseases can occur”. (*Uttarkand*, 120: 15) It also suggests a way out to attain *samadhi* (peace) in this condition: “Adopt a routine, *dharma*, ethics (best practices), penance, knowledge, sacrifice, chanting, charity and many more; medicines are there but they are not able to cure the diseases. By the grace of Lord Rama, if this coincidence remains, then all these diseases will be destroyed.

Believe the words of the *Vaidya* (doctor) as well as those of a *Sadguru* (a good/virtuous teacher).” (*Uttarkand*, 121: 3) In real life nobody considers Tulsidas to be doctor but metaphorically speaking every saint is a doctor. So is the case with a large number of other Hindu (non-medico) texts that mention *karmas*/sins and their specific consequences in terms of diseases or otherwise in this life or later. One may refer to P V Kane’s *History of Dharmashastra*, for details on this issue.

The Hindus also believe that one can also expiate one’s sins and mitigate one’s *karmaphala* by undertaking penance (*tapa तप*) and atonement (*Prāyaścitta प्रायश्चित्त*). Suffering on account of a disease is seen as a process of mitigation of *karmaphala* of some sinful karma for there are some diseases that cannot be cured by adopting any therapeutic measure. They are cured only after the effects of past actions/deeds are exhausted i.e., fully enjoyed/undertaken (*Charaka Sambita, Sharira Sthana* 1: 117)<sup>13</sup> Some persons (particularly *Hath Yogis* and some adherents of Jain sect), therefore, avoid taking medicines so that their suffering, a sort of purifying and cleansing process, becomes intense. They regard the suffering on account of the disease as an opportunity for undertaking atonement (*prayishchitta*) and penance. In this way they avoid making their sin and its punishment (*karmaphala*) a part of the *sanchita karma* in the lives to come. Some Hindus (*bhakti margis भक्ति-मार्गी*) also undertake chanting (*japa*) as purifying and cleansing measures to overcome their past bad *karma* (*sanchita karma*) though in the traditional, practical and average Hindu wisdom one is supposed to take medicines: “knowledge is a friend in foreign lands, wife is a friend at home / medicine is a friend to the ill, and dharma is a friend to the deceased person.” (*Chanakya Niti* 5:15)<sup>14</sup>

It is also necessary to point out here that the Hindus value immortal soul more than their mortal/ destroyable body (useful only as a functional tool/means) for they believe: “The soul is neither born, nor does it ever die; nor having once existed, does it ever cease to be. The soul is without birth, eternal, immortal, and ageless. It is not destroyed when the body is destroyed.” (*Bhagavad Gita* 2: 20) “As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.” (*Bhagavadgita* 2: 22) They regard this life as i) a transition between the previous and the next birth on account of reincarnation (*pumarjanm*) and they consider this life to be (ii) an opportunity to prepare

themselves to be absorbed in Brahma (*Brahmaleen; Moksha*) after death. The Hindus try to improve their lives by trying to get rid of their sins (*sanchit karma*) in their preparation to get *Moksha* (release from the cycle of birth and death), which is the ultimate goal of human life. Therefore, a devotee after having said his prayers sits in the temple premises and prays for an easy death<sup>15</sup>. Many Hindus keep on chanting *Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra*<sup>16</sup> to overcome death dispassionately as a matter of faithful practice. The Hindus believe that life-span of each body is pre-determined and therefore every single day is to be lived as if it is the last one. The Hindus wish for a good death (*su-mrtyu*) in old age, at the right astrological time, and in the right place (on the banks of the sacred Ganges). Whenever they consider that the body has outlived its utility they readily give it up voluntarily by adopting some means according to their beliefs.

There has been a tradition of voluntary death (the sacrifice of the self) in the Hindu community, “linked to a specific purpose” of obtaining heaven or liberation. For example, both the ascetics and the house holders gradually reduce the intake of food and liquids in their fasting to death (for a good cause), called *Santhara* (by the Jains) and *Prayopavesa* (by the Hindus). Sanatani Hindus used to throng to Prayagraj to end their lives by jumping into the river Yamuna from a tree called *Akshayavat* (identified by Alexander Cunningham). The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang) mentions that the tree was surrounded with the human bones during his visit. The story of Kalanos, who entered fire to end himself without a second thought after falling ill while accompanying Alexander the Great to Athens, is well known. The examples of death by fire abound in the form of Sati. Some Hindus stand in the Ganges in Varanasi for days together without any food and water. An enlightened person like Bhishma or Dronacharya may choose the time and place of his death. Death in Kedar Khand of Varanasi is considered good for attaining liberation, *moksha* (काश्याम मरणात् मुक्तिः *Kashyam Maranat Muktih*); There are several *Ashramas* where people come to stay before breathing their last. Among them Mumukshu Bhawan (1920) and Kshilabh Mukti Bhawan (1958) are quite well known. One should not presume that Hinduism encourages suicides rather it prepares one to accept death playfully and willingly. The Hindus believe that an individual passes through a long cycle of existence/ bodies experiencing several births and deaths before getting a human body as a God’s gift after a lot of good karma. Therefore, while a man is



alive it is his utmost duty to maintain this body, to keep it clean and healthy as it is an opportunity to get liberation by breaking the cycle of birth and death.

## 5. DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

Scientific approach demands an analysis of the data and the evidence collected with five senses. This in turn means that the evidence is tested on the basis of reason and the data are logically analysed; this approach leaves very little scope for faith in the unseen and the unrealized. However, any reasonably groomed scientific person also talks about the limitations of his research in terms of observations and data collection and therefore does not refute the wisdom in Hamlet's famous lines: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (*Hamlet* 1.5.167-8) which hints that there is always some scope for the unknown. It will be quite pertinent to point out here that despite all scientific inventions and techniques all secrets of a human body have not been unlocked to anyone however reasonable that person may claim himself to be. It shall, therefore, not be an exaggeration to say that a human body has largely remained a mystery to the scientists. Those persons who have converted science into a dogma have scant respect for the traditional wisdom and have little faith in God and religion. They, therefore, come into conflict with the people in the earlier two groups very easily. So, the meeting point of the three groups is "faith" which is held by the first two groups and which is attacked by the third one. This sort of conflict has also been visualised by Justice R A Jahagirdar, an adherent of scientific temper:

"Scientific temper cannot ... go hand in hand with theology or religion, especially a theology or religion which has incorporated in it miracles. Almost all religions are based upon alleged revelations, beliefs in supernatural beings and in after-life and have fossilized rules of conduct called morality having no relevance to the secular, present day needs of mankind. Belief in supernatural beings capable of affecting human destiny is wholly dangerous to a rational living. It may lead to a lack of interest in present life and to a concern for an imaginary salvation in the other world. It also inculcates a feeling of guilt in the man for sins imagined or otherwise and prevents him from realising his potentiality as a human being. Belief in a book as the inspired word of God is inimical to secular search for knowledge." (Jahagirdar 7)

Theoretically speaking, the people in this group should be following a trained doctor's advice and be advocating all scientific systems like Allopathic, Ayurvedic, Homeopathic and Greek systems

of medicine but they are largely seen advocating only Allopathic system of medicine. Nay, they ruthlessly and unjustifiably criticize the other systems which they do not follow and about which they are largely ignorant because of their limitations. Therefore, other people sometimes become suspicious of their intentions, motives and activities, and they (the third group) are branded as agents of Multinational drug industry/mafia.

A scientific study goes only by evidence traceable with sensory perceptions. No scientist can claim to know the universal truth as all science deals with temporal truths based on facts as they stand today, new evidence in the form of a new sensory perception (with the help of new tools/ equipment) is never ruled out. No one can claim that the modern/ancient health science has a cure for every sick human body in the world for there are many matrices between the human body and its environment that remain unsolved riddles. Besides, some new challenges are always thrown by nature and environment for example, a pandemic like COVID-19 has created a panic all over the world and no scientific remedy in the form of a vaccine or medicine is in sight at the moment. A large number of deaths have been reported even from scientifically advanced countries that used to claim the best medical care for their citizens. Similarly, the viral strain that drove the Ebola outbreak in West Africa (2014-2016) killed up to 90% of the people it infected, making it the most lethal member of the Ebola family. Likewise, more than 80% persons suffering from Marburg virus died in the virus outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (1998-2000) though only small outbreaks among lab workers in Germany were reported in 1967 because of this virus. Developing a defence against the virus depends on how it behaves and on how human bodies react to it. All these cases are being cited to prove the suddenness, urgency and contingency that is created by nature for which science has no immediate solution.

The fact also remains that so far, no vaccine has been found for even simple/serious looking diseases like Chagas disease, Chikungunya, Dengue, Cytomegalovirus, HIV/AIDS, Hookworm infection, Leishmaniasis, Malaria and Zika virus to name just a few at random even after several years' of effort. Historically speaking, success has eluded scientists in developing vaccines against RNA viruses because mutation of these viruses renders antigen/vaccine efforts useless. Some vaccines have been rendered ineffective for new strains and mutations of viruses have come into existence. In recent

decades, several deadly viruses, as mentioned earlier, have affected the human beings and have claimed thousands of lives. This is purely a matter between one human body and the virus. If the immunity of the body is high it remains unaffected by the virus; if the immunity is low the virus overpowers the body. The scientist/doctor has only a very limited role to play in it.

Those who advocate a scientific approach as a creed have no way out to meet the challenges during the period between the disease outbreak and its solution. In their haughtiness and over enthusiasm for science they forget the limitations of human mind and scientists' knowledge at any given point of time. Human beings, however, survive during this period according to their traditional wisdom and faith to the chagrin of this group. For example, lock-down and social/physical distancing were suggested as measures to contain COVID-19 by the World Health Organisation. In the name of drug the already banned Hydroxychloroquine is being used in some countries including the USA despite resistance from certain quarters. The issue is not very simple to understand as various lobbies/interest-groups are at play. The news of various conspiracy theories, corrupt Big Pharma and the elite, global totalitarianism and slavery has further complicated the situation and the issue. Baxter Dmitry reports that the Germans are rising up against Bill Gates, demanding humanity to wake up and reject the self-styled "world health dictator" (newspunch.com). The British author David Icke has been talking of a global agenda being pursued by a few powerful business families in the form of the Origination, History, Symbolism, Secret Societies, Big Brother Surveillance, Manipulation of Wars, Politics, Business, Banking, Media and Mind Control, Religion etc. (exopoliticshongkong.com) Icke holds that they use — Problem-Reaction-Solution technique in most of the cases to exercise their control. He has come out with a conspiracy theory even in case of COVID-19 according to which this is a strategy to render people helpless and make them more and more dependent on the government so that they may be exploited more and more. "[Icke] also said that Bill Gates invented 5G to 'depopulate' the world". (financialexpress) YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms have closed his accounts and removed his videos on the pretext of stopping mis-information to spread. (financialexpress) One fictional account of this interplay has been presented in Sinclair Lewis's prophetic *Arrowsmith* (1925). The book derides the medical

culture that allows belief and profits to distort science. “The novel predicted many of the successes and problems affecting today’s medical profession, such as the competing needs and goals of clinicians and medical scientists; commercial interests of pharmaceutical companies developing new medications and vaccines versus the need to seek for scientific truth; political and social difficulties in developing programs for protecting a community’s public health; and the doctor’s evolving role in American society.” (Fangerau 82–87) One can easily find the resonances of the current climate and an interplay of various matrices that Icke has been talking about in the fictional books like Albert Camus’ *The Plague* (1947), Michael Crichton’s *The Andromeda Strain* (1969), Stephen King’s *The Stand* (1978), Dean Koontz’s *The Eyes of Darkness* (1981), Emily St. John Mandel’s *Station Eleven* (2014), Josh Malerman’s *Bird Box* (2014) and Katie M. Flynn’s *In The Companion* (2020) and the journalistic account like Molly Caldwell Crosby’s *The American Plague: The Untold Story of Yellow Fever, The Epidemic That Shaped Our History* (2006).

### 5.1. Analysis

The adherents of scientific approach come down heavily on those who display their faith by “exposing them in public eyes” and “persecuting them in the court-rooms”. These are just two of the many tricks that they adopt to silence the others and interfering in their ways of life; censorship is another as has been hinted above. These are their survival strategies among many. They do this for their own survival as has also been referred to by Justice Jahagirdar while explaining the causes of this anti-pathy:

“Why to object to such innocuous beliefs? An irrational practice indulged in repeatedly by an individual or a society debilitates that individual and that society. They present a grave threat to the rational basis of human society. A great hazard lies in the erosion of reasoning capacity of human beings, being an impediment to social and human progress. Another danger is that repetitive acceptance of superstitions requires some guru or priest to interpret them. This is putting the clock back.” (Jahagirdar 15)

Justice Jhagirdar himself uses a word from the religious vocabulary, “sin”, to make his point: “The most serious aspect of the supernatural is not the so-called revelations, but the miracles, the myths and guesses and the injunction that all this must be taken on faith; not to do so is forbidden, it is a sin.” (Jahagirdar 17) It is a sort of hypocrisy that one resorts to using the same lexical items one was

arguing against. The issues of inherent and inalienable human rights and human free-will that every man is born with also need to be evoked at this stage – who will decide how and with which faith an individual has to live with?

The people who go by their faith are described as charlatans, superstitious and pseudoscientific by the people claiming to have scientific temper. However, postmodernism has made us sensitive to various kinds of realities. Here, is a testimony from a believer (who calls himself Jamie) who is using scientific techniques/gadgets too:

“I believe with all of my heart that God can heal sick children. However, with the same thought in mind, I also believe that Satan would love to take my son out!! I am careful to MONITOR my son’s diagnosis of Juvenile Diabetes..I know that God has healed him..it is only a matter of time before it is physically manifested. Each time I take his glucose, and it is “normal” I thank God for the healing. The numbers only serve as confirmation that he is healed, and not validation. Satan does not want anyone to hear his adult testimony (that he is healed completely) so in my neglect..he will TRY to kill him. God will not let Alex fall! Our government and mankind are the ones that do not believe. I have complete faith, and with each reading..it is only getting stronger! I would be insane not to take him to the doctor..I know that Jesus is the great physician..also I share this testimony with neighbors..and as usual they believe that he never had the disease after they are aware that his reading was 388 to 450 for 3 months at least. He is responding so well (to my faith). Please don’t believe that God will punish you or your child if they seek medical attention. I pray that God blesses all of the children and parents that pursue faith healing. I would be broken hearted if I lost either of my children [sic!!!]” (Jamie in pbs.org/wnet)

On the basis of poor language/style the above case may be branded to be one of a person with low and careless education and brushed aside and dismissed saying that the testimony is not to be relied on. One should realize that faith has nothing to do with one’s educational qualifications. For a person with scientific temper the above case is a fit case to be dragged into a court of law.

Another such self-appointed investigator is a former magician James Randi who investigates paranormal, occult, and supernatural claims. In 1996 he founded ‘The James Randi Educational Foundation’ (*JREF*) “to help people defend themselves from paranormal and pseudoscientific claims” (randi.org); the Foundation “works to inspire an investigative spirit in a new generation of critical thinkers”. The JREF used to offer a million-dollar reward for anyone who can produce evidence of paranormal abilities under controlled

conditions which stands “terminated” now (randi.org). James Randi’s *The Faith Healers* is a polemical book as it was prompted against a person who was running for “the presidency of the United States” (Randi n.p.). It is a damning indictment of the faith-healing practices of the leading televangelists and others who claim divine healing powers. According to the author himself it is an angry man’s book which “is rambling, anecdotal, crotchety, and ecumenically offensive.” He may be excused for all this as he confesses that he is not an academician but the question remains if an angry man’s tirade can be taken seriously. Similarly, in an entry *An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural* (1995), Randi tries to discredit homeopathy by observing the following:

“Homeopathy

This claimed healing modus is included here because it is an excellent example of an attempt to make sympathetic magic work. Its founder, Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann (1775?-1843), believed that all illnesses develop from only three sources: syphilis, venereal warts, and what he called “the itch.”

The motto of homeopathy is “Similia similibus curantur” (“Like cures like”). It claims that doses of substances that produce certain symptoms will relieve those symptoms; however, the “doses” are extremely attenuated solutions or mixtures, so attenuated that not a single molecule of the original substance remains. In fact, the homeopathic corrective is actually pure water, nothing more. The theory is that the vibrations or “effect” of the diluted-out substance are still present and work on the patient. Currently, researchers in homeopathy are examining a new notion that water can be magnetized and can transmit its medicinal powers by means of a copper wire. Really. The royal family of England adopted homeopathy at its very beginning and have retained a homeopathic physician on staff ever since.

The only concern of homeopaths is to treat the symptoms of disease, rather than the basic causes, which they do not recognize. Thus homeopathy correctly falls into the category of magic. And quackery.” (Randi np)

Randy does not take into consideration the fact that an atom is more powerful than a molecule and that a nano-particle is more powerful than an atom. He remains unimpressed by the large number of people who claim to have been cured by homeopathy and hence ignores their testimony.

The above case has been cited to prove that the issue at stake is not to arrive at some truth but to make a sort of power-display. As hinted earlier there is sort of war between the two groups: the

religious group and the atheists. Both the parties claim that they know the truth and are at least very near it. While the first group claims its authority banking on the mysterious the other wants to claim it by debunking the mysterious. However, it is doubtful if the mysterious can be understood with the help of five senses only. Both the groups wish to strengthen their camps; books and strategies are produced accordingly. For example, Peter G. Boghossian wants to create atheists (and not truth seekers). He has published *Manual for Creating Atheists* (Pitchstone Press, 2013), a handbook for equipping atheists with “treatments” to cure religious believers of the “faith virus.” He is described as an “atheist tactician” by Tom Gilson who advances his arguments in order to counter him in his pamphlet: “Peter Boghossian, Atheist Tactician: “What He Gets Right, (Some of) What He Gets Wrong, and How Christians Must Respond”. Health problems/issues are being used just as tools in this power politics. No system can claim to be fool-proof and perfect. Sharon A rightly throws the following observation in the face of the science-fanatics: “Thousands of children die every year under medical treatment. ... You have only to look at the records of medical misdiagnosis, wrong treatment, and prescription drug related deaths to know that there must be a better way.” (pbs.org/wnet) Similarly, cherise simms [*sic*] rightly points out: “The assumption that children treated medically live while those treated prayerfully die is disingenuous in the face of the facts.” (pbs.org/wnet) Robert Mendelsohn, the Orthodox Jewish paediatrician, in his books (*Confessions of a Medical Heretic* and *Male Practice: How Doctors Manipulate Women*) charges that all is not well with the official medical system. A formerly practicing doctor, Larry also highlights how the Government has appropriated a particular medical healing system to prosecute the others:

“I am a Christian and formerly practicing medical doctor. The medical system is a government religion. All churches which unquestioningly accept medicine are government churches. Here in Des Moines we have Lutheran, Methodist and Catholic hospitals. ... I lost medical privileges at Lutheran Hospital for advocating fasting as prayer—they would only recognize fasting as unproven medical therapy and would not consider the spiritual aspects. Some believe Juvenile Diabetes is post-viral autoimmune disease. I believe that fasting can activate bodies own stem cells to form new pancreatic insulin producing cells. Giving these children insulin guarantees this will never happen. Christian Science probably claims to have cases available claiming healing through prayer of this malady. I consider CS to be government church also with its lawyers and tax breaks.

... I know of at least two children who have died of juvenile diabetes in teens with good medical care. One was son of former NBC president Michael Gartner. They would never be put on trial. The medical aphorism would apply--The operation (mainstream medical/religious government approach) was a success, but the patient died. ... It is a tragedy that Kara died and it was unnecessary. It is possible she could have been healed by Jesus/faith/prayer today. ... Government doctors would prefer to treat us all as patients rather than citizens with rights.” (pbs.org/wnet)

The latest researches (Nobel Laureate Japanese cell biologist Yoshinori Ohsumi’s research, 2016) in this field indicate that during starvation/ fasting<sup>17</sup>, cells break down proteins and other cell components and use them for energy. Fasting activates autophagy (recycling of cells and renewing their content), which helps in slowing down the aging process and has a positive impact on cell renewal. During autophagy, cells destroy viruses and bacteria and get rid of damaged structures. It’s a process that is critical for cell health, renewal, and survival. (bluezones) Thus, Larry’s approach to fasting is not without a scientific basis but he was persecuted because his approach was not to the liking of a particular group in power.

Since in the modern world political power largely lies in the hands in the atheists and secularists, they use it to impose their views on “the others”. Prosecuting “the other” in the court of law is a “seemingly just” and soft option to display one’s power. In the process Science/reason is relegated to the back seat and the display of authority and power occupies the driver’s seat. The issues like who has got a control on one’s body and how that living body has to deal with it while it is sick have been the points of contestation in the courts of law. One example will suffice here: “The U.S. Supreme Court has found that the right of self-determination, which includes the right to refuse medical care, is inherent in the liberty interests protected by the federal constitution. But the highest Court in our land hasn’t indicated that this is a guaranteed privacy right, but rather is better considered a right of liberty.” (journals.lww) In this context it is clear that any intervention of a doctor may be termed as Satanic act and both the doctor and the patient may be punished for interfering in the ways of God by the designated authority. During the days of Inquisition in Europe and elsewhere this was one of main issues. Providing medical help to those who were suffering was one of the serious charges against scorers and witches before the inquisitors to ponder over. There are several studies on the issue. In one study For example, Timothy D Walker after examining the



records of 442 Inquisition dossiers writes, “Men were arrested in surprisingly large numbers, not only for such crimes as conducting acts of simple sorcery and divining the future, but also for curing illness.” (Walker 346) The conflict also has another dimension i.e. a conflict in the majority/Govt view and the minority view. In the process some religious institutions become cohorts to the state machinery and the rights to those who do not toe the official line have to bear the brunt of the system. Though the rights of the minority groups are generally protected by a broad rubric of laws like the ones on freedom to life, personal freedom, religious practice, human dignity and human rights they have to contest a long-drawn legal battle for exercising their choices/ rights.

Such groups/ individuals are sometimes drawn into legal battle for various reasons. For example, doubts are raised about the genuine exercise of the patient’s free-will in refusing the treatment in the light of the implicit or explicit influence/ pressure of a third party. In one such case Judge Donaldson observed:

“Does the patient really mean what he says or is he merely saying it for a quiet life, to satisfy someone else or because the advice and persuasion to which he has been subjected is such that he can no longer think and decide for himself? In other words, is it a decision expressed in form only, not in reality?” (Donaldson 389)

Another reason is a sort of arrogance of the members of civil societies or the local governments. They believe that their thinking and ways are more important/ scientific/ enduring/ sustainable and therefore need to be thrust upon others. The following observation of the attorney John Kasprak hints at the conflict between the two attitudes:

“Many cases in which courts have been asked to order medical treatment have involved patients who refused to give consent based upon religious beliefs. Some of the most common involve those whose religious beliefs forbid transfusions or any blood products or by-products. When faced with patients in need of surgery requiring blood, doctors have turned to the courts to try and overcome a patient’s refusal to consent to a transfusion. How the courts decide such cases depends on factors such as whether the patient is an adult or minor, competent or incapacitated, or the chief provider for minor dependents. (see Fay Rozovsky, *Consent to Treatment: A Practical Guide*, p. 440).” (cga.ct.gov)

The assumption of the local governments and their supporters is: theirs is the perfect system that guarantees perfect health and therefore it needs to be thrust upon others. This attitude is an

example of one-upmanship so a kind of power-struggle is always on. No wonder, the matter has been contested in the courts of law. Two examples, of this sort of litigation in American courts are being mentioned below:

... [the] courts in Wisconsin and Oregon recently decided two cases involving faith healing that resulted in the death of a child. In Wisconsin, [the] parents who had relied on spiritual healing to treat their diabetic 11-year-old daughter were found guilty of second-degree reckless homicide. In Oregon, [the] parents were acquitted of manslaughter charges in the death of their 15-month-old daughter, but the girl's father ultimately was convicted of a lesser charge of criminal mistreatment. (pewforum)

The following are the three logical voices of ordinary Christian resentment against this sort of legal action:

Opinion 1: "The assumption that children treated medically live while those treated prayerfully die is disingenuous in the face of the facts. Children die in hospitals every day in every state of this nation. If a child dies under medical care should we prosecute the parents? Should we shut down hospitals and clinics when a child dies? Obviously this issue is not about children living or dying because if it were modern medicine has a paltry record. I believe the parents should be prosecuted if there has been no treatment or evidence of care. But until the medical establishment can show that children do not die under its care how can you force a parent to place their child with no guarantees it will be healed? How can you prosecute a parent for doing what they believe is best for their child when the option of the medical model has so many child deaths associated with it?" (pewforum)

Opinion 2: "I notice that Swan's child died under medical treatment. She can say she took the child too late but what about the millions of children that are taken immediately and die anyway?"

We need more options to health care not less. Until the perfect system is found where nobody dies, we should not be so arrogant as to call one system better than another and then prosecute one when it fails and not the other." (pewforum)

Opinion 3: "Thousands of children die every year under medical treatment. Are parents prosecuted for those deaths? Wouldn't we feel it to be a violation of those parents freedom of religion if they were prosecuted for NOT praying and seeking a spiritual solution? Why do we assume that medical solutions are the best and almost the only remedies? You have only to look at the records of medical mis-diagnosis, wrong treatment, and prescription drug related deaths to know that there must be a better way." (pbs.org)

Those who are familiar with the stories of scientists like Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) and Galileo di Vincenzo Bonaulti de Galilei (1564–1642) realize that the

relationship of scientists and church has been very volatile particularly in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. During most of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, fear of heretics spreading teachings and opinions that contradicted the Bible dominated. The Catholic Church used to persecute scientists whose theories were deemed to be heretical; their books were forbidden by placing them on the Index of Prohibited Books. All those early scientists whose findings were not congenial to Church were punished severely by the church. (see Draper, Dickson) Things improved and the scientists could work freely only when the royal patronage was granted to the scientists. For example, The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge was founded on 28 November 1660, with a royal charter by King Charles II and Académie des sciences (The French Academy of Sciences) was founded in 1666 by Louis XIV at the suggestion of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, to encourage and protect the spirit of French scientific research. Germany followed suit. With the passage of time and because of misplaced enthusiasm science too craves to occupy the place of a religion. However, things as they stand today are much different from those in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century. Roman Catholics have been trying to improve their image by reconciling themselves to the scientific theories and are indulging in a face-lift exercise. Today Roman Catholic Church considers itself to be a patron of sciences. It has been prolific in the foundation and funding of schools, universities, and hospitals, and many clergy have been active in the sciences. Historian Lawrence M. Principe writes: “it is clear from the historical record that the Catholic church has been probably the largest single and longest-term patron of science in history, that many contributors to the Scientific Revolution were themselves Catholic, and that several Catholic institutions and perspectives were key influences upon the rise of modern science.” (Principe 102).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

People look for happiness; looking for a viable solution for their health problems is a part of such a quest. People need something to fall back on during the times of crises and on the basis of their mental makes-ups, religious sensibilities and education they try to find some solutions. Time-tested religious beliefs usually help them a great deal in facing and braving the tough times. Physical diseases are just a minor issue in comparison to daily encounters with the moments of crises. In such moments of crises emotional/

psychological health of a person plays a very vital role. The best sustenance for such health comes from one's religious attitudes which one can afford almost at zero cost. Realizing its importance even the World Health Organisation has started the process to revise its existing definition of health ("a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being") by including the spiritual dimension in it. The modern medical science, particularly allopathic system, is incomplete as it is not able to provide solutions to all the physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being. Therefore, its promulgation and propagation in the name of scientific creed is not desirable. People should have a larger choice to exercise their options according to their time-tested belief systems. Any religious or atheistic dogma should not be imposed on the people unless there is a full guarantee to give a complete and perfect solution to the ailing persons. People have a right and a duty to raise their children according to their belief systems. Any interference in them will be deemed to be regimentation that needs to be resented in a democratic society. The democratically elected governments should take care of the people's welfare in keeping with their beliefs and they should not become a party to different kinds of lobbies that try to restrain people and exploit them monetarily. Similarly, the courts of law should exercise restraint while delivering judgments and should not unnecessarily assume the role of being the master guardians of the civilizational progress. The Hindus had developed a holistic life pattern of life in which even managing a sick body was the responsibility of the individual with least support from the outside world. This system (Ayurveda) being affordable, sustainable and environment friendly gratifies and empowers all; it is fit to be adopted by all not only during the normal days but also during the crisis-torn period of COVID-19. The system can be studied and explored further. In fact, the rules to keep a body healthy are so simple that even an animal knows/practices them. Most of the things to maintain one's good health are available freely and almost free of cost. This approach of keeping healthy is good for an individual and a society but bad for those who care for the health of economy in terms of GDP and measure human index in terms of expenditure incurred on medicines. Therefore, a relook at some the prevalent parameters to measure growth (like GDP and GNP) is also necessary. The UNO has rightfully started working and exploring GNH but a lot of work in this direction is yet to be undertaken and completed.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The diseases and the specific persons who were cured by Jesus have been mentioned in the *New Testament*. Jesus is said to have cured a deadly fever in the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54), a fever in Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-41), a few paralysed persons (Matthew 9:1-8), cleansed some lepers (Matthew 10:8), healed a man of dropsy (Luke 14:1-6), opened the eyes of some blind men (Matthew 20:29-34), cured a few persons who was plagued by a demon (Mark 3:11), healed an invalid man (John 5:1-17), loosened the tongue of a man who could not speak (Matthew 9:32-33), cured a deaf and dumb man (Mark 7:31-37), restored the ear of the high priest's servant (Luke 22:50-51), restored a withered hand (Mark 3:1-6) and cured a woman of an issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34). He is also said to have raised a few from amongst the dead later (Luke 7:11-17) and later he himself resurrected (Mark 16: 1-6). All these are just the examples of faith healing as Jesus was not using any medicines.
2. The official process for canonization (revised by the Roman Catholic Church several times since its institution in 1234 AD, the last being on February 7, 1983), requires a testimony for performing at least one miracle in the form of interceding before beatification and one after beatification for the declaration of sainthood. Before 1234 AD martyrs and those recognized as holy were usually declared saints by the Church at the time of their deaths.
3. Like Apostolic Faith Church, Bethlehem Healing Temple-Faith, CSI St.Peter's Church, Faith Healing & Deliverance, Faith Healing Anointing Temple, Faith Healing Bible Church Toronto, Faithcity Church, FOLJ Church, Global Faith Healing Ministries Church, Greater Faith Ministries, Healing The Nations Faith Ministries, Hope & Faith Church, Houston Faith Church, Latter-day Saints, Miracle Healing Centre, Mount Zion Assembly Healing Temple of the Apostolic Faith, Pentecostals, United Apostolic Church & Faith Healing Ministry, Word of Faith Healing Ministry.
4. "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India- To develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform." (*The Constitution of India*, Article 51 A(h)) The duties were not a part of the original form of the Constitution and were inserted later vide Forty-second Amendment Act, 1976, which came into force with effect from 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1977 on the recommendation of Swaran Singh Committee when the leftists were riding the back of Congress, the ruling party, and the opposition in the country had put behind the bars.
5. "Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully. ... The effect of this education on the Hindoos is prodigious. No Hindoo who has received an English education ever continues to be sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy. But many profess themselves pure Deists, and some embrace Christianity. ... The Hindoo religion is so extravagantly absurd that it is impossible to teach a boy astronomy, geography, natural history, without completely destroying the

hold which that religion has on his mind. ... It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any efforts to proselytise, without the smallest interference with religious liberty, merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection.” Macaulay Thomas Babington to Zachary Macaulay, 12 October 1836, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macanlay*. Ed. Trevelyan, George Otto, Sir, 1838-1928. 1876, pp. 454-56, <https://archive.org/details/lifelettersoflor01trevuoft>.

6. “कायबालग्रहोर्ध्वाङ्गशल्यदर्ष्टा जरावृषान् ५ अष्टावङ्गानि तस्याहुश्चिकित्सा येषु संश्रिता *Kaaya baala graha urdhvaanga shalya damshttra jara vrshan Ashtau angaani tasyaabuh chikitsa yeshu samskrita.*” (*Ashtang Hridayam, Sutra Sthana 1:5-6*)
7. संयोगे च विभागे च कारणं द्रव्यमाश्रितम्, कर्तव्यस्य क्रिया कर्म कर्म नान्यदपेक्षते *samyoge cha vibhage cha karanam dravyamashritam, kartavyasya kriya karm karm nanyadpekshate.* The causative factor in conjunction and disjunction is located in dravya and performance of the activities to be done (as intended by the doer) is karma (action). Karma does not depend on any other factor (to produce the activities). (*Charaka Sambhita, Sutrasthan 1: 52*)
8. (a) निर्विष्टं दैवशब्देन कर्म यत् पौर्वदेहिकम्, हेतुस्तदपि कालेन रोगाणामुपलभ्यते *Nirdhistam daivashabden karma yat paurvedhikam, hetustadapi kalen roganamuplabhyate.* The deeds performed in the previous life or past time [known as daiva (fate)] are also the causative factors for the manifestation of certain diseases (*karmaja roga*). (*Charaka Sambhita, Sharira Sthana 1: 116*) (b) कर्मजस्तु मतो जन्तुः कर्मजास्तस्य चामयाः | नह्यते कर्मणो जन्म रोगाणां पुरुषस्य वा ||१९|| *karmajastu mato jantuh karmajastasya camayah | nahyate karmṇo jñm rogaṇāṃ puruṣasya va ||19||* Human beings, as well as the diseases, originate from the deeds performed in past life. Without karma (past action or deeds) neither human beings nor their diseases could have been created. (*Charaka Sambhita, Sutra Sthana 25:19*)
9. न हि कर्म महत् किञ्चित् फलं यस्य न भुज्यते, क्रियाग्नाः कर्मजा रोगाः प्रशमं यान्ति तत्क्षयात् *Na hi karma mahat kinchit phalam yasya na bhujyate, kriyagnah karmja rogah prashamam yanti tatksheyat* (*Charaka Sambhita, Sharira Sthana 1: 117*)
10. परिहार्याण्यपथ्यानि सदा परिहरन्ः | भवत्यनृणातां प्राप्ः साधूनामिह पण्डितः ||४३|| यत्तु रोगसमुत्थानमशक्यमिह केनचित् | परिहर्तुं न तत् प्राप्य शोचितव्यं मनीषिभिः ||४४|| *pariharyanyapathyani sada paribarannarab | bhavatyannrunatam praptab sadhunamiba panditab ||43|| yattu rogasamutthanamashakyamiba kenacit | paribartum na tat prapya shocitavyam manisibhib | ||44||* One should always avoid unwholesome food. If one gets afflicted with a disease despite leading a healthy lifestyle, then he is not at fault as it could be the effect of previous birth. (*Charaka Sambhita, Sutra Sthana 28: 43-44*)
11. इमांस्तु धारयेद्देवान् हितार्थी प्रेत्य चेह च, साहसानामशस्तानां मनोवाक्कायकर्मणाम् ||२६|| *imamstu dharyedvegan hitarthi pretya cheh cha, sabasanamshastanam manovakayakarmanam.* A person willing for his own well-being, in this life and after (death), should suppress the urges to engage in adventures, and extreme activities of psyche, speech and body. [26] लोभशोकभयक्रोधमानवेगान् विधारयेत्, नैर्लज्ज्येष्वातिरागाणामभिध्यायाश्च बुद्धिमान् ||२७|| *lobb-shoka-bhaya-krodh-manavegan vidharyet,*

*nairlajjayeshbryatiraganambhidhyayashcha buddhiman* An intelligent person should control greed, grief, fear, anger, egoism, shamelessness (impudence), jealousy, excessive affliction (in anything), and desire to acquire someone else's wealth. [27] परुषस्यातिमात्रस्य सूचकस्यानुत्स्य च, वाक्यस्याकालयुक्तस्य धारयेद्वेगमुत्थितम् ||२८|| *parushyatimatrisya suchakasyanriasya cha, vakyasyakalyuktasya dharyedvegumutthitam* Harsh talks, excessive talking, that which intends to harm others or backbiting, lying and untimely speech (improper words at improper time) are to be restrained during speaking. [28] देहप्रवृत्तिर्या कचिद्विद्यते परपीडया, स्त्रीभोगस्तेयहिंसाद्या तस्यावेगान्विधारयेत् ||२९|| *dehpravrittirya kachidvidyate parpeedyaya, streebhogsteyhimsadya tasyaveganvidharyet* Physical actions intended to trouble others, excessive indulgence in sex, stealing, violence (persecution), etc. should be restrained. [29] पुण्यशब्दो विपापत्वान्मनोवाक्कायकर्मणाम्, धर्मार्थकामान् पुरुषः सुखी भुङ्क्ते चिनोति च ||३०|| *punyashabdō vipapatvanmanovakakayakarmanam, dharmarthakaman purushah sukhi bhunkte chinoti cha* The virtuous one, who is free from all evil deeds of mind, speech and body, is indeed happy and enjoys the fruits of dharma (virtue), Artha (wealth), and kama (desires). [30] (*Charaka Sambhita, sutra sthana 7: 26-30*)

12. विप्रान् गुरुन् धर्षयतां पापं कर्म च कुर्वताम् ||८|| *vipran gurun dharshayatam papam karma cha kurvatam* ||8|| *insulting peers like brahmin / guru and other respectable persons and indulging in sinful acts are the etiological and risk factors of kushtha.* ||8|| (*Charaka Sambhita, Chikitsa Sthana, 7: 8*) वचांस्यतथ्यानि कृतघ्नभावो निन्दा सुराणां | गुरुधर्षणं च, पापक्रिया पूर्वकृतं च कर्म हेतुः किलासस्य विरोधि चान्म् ||१७७|| *vachamsyatathyani kerutagnabbhavo ninda suranam* [1] *gurudharshanam cha, papakriya purvakrutam cha karma hetuh kilasasya virodhi channam* ||177|| Untruthfulness, ungratefulness, no respect for the gods, disrespect for the peers (guru), sinful acts, and misdeeds of past life and intake of mutually contradictory food are the causes for *śvitra*. (*Charaka Sambhita, Chikitsa Sthana, 7: 177*). Similarly, the cause of insanity due to psychic possession (*Exogenous Unmada*) is attributed to negative *karmas* in the previous lives (*Charaka Sambhita, Nidanasthana, 7:10, 7:19-20*) यस्तु दोषनिमित्तेभ्य उन्मादेभ्यः समुत्थानपूर्वरूपलिङ्गवेदनोपशयविशेषसमन्वितो भवत्युन्मादस्तमागन्तुकमाचक्षते | केचित् पुनः पूर्वकृतं कर्माप्रशस्तमिच्छन्ति तस्य निमित्तम् | तस्य च हेतुः प्रज्ञापराध एवेति भगवान् पुनर्वसुरात्रेयः | प्रज्ञापराधाद्ध्ययं देवर्षिपितृगन्धर्वयक्षराक्षसपिशाच गुरुवृद्धसिद्धाचार्यपूज्यानवमत्याहितान्याचरति, अन्यद्वा किञ्चिदेवविधं कर्माप्रशस्तमारभते; तमात्मना हतमुपघ्नन्ते देवादयः कुर्वन्त्युन्मत्तम् ||१०|| *yastu doshanimitebhyah unmadaebhyah samutthan purvarupa linga vedanopasaya vishesha samanvito bhavatyunmad aastamagantukamachakshate kechit punah purvakritam karmaprashastamicchanti tasya nimittam | tasya cha hetuh prajaparadha eveti bhagavan punarvasuratreyah | prajaparadbaddhyayam devarshipitrugandharvayaksharakshasapishacha guruvriddhasi ddhacharyapujanavamatyabitanyacharati, anyadva ki~jchidevamvidham karmaprashas tamarabhate; tamatmanahatamupaghnantō devadayah kurvantyunmattam* ||10|| *Charaka Sambhita, Nidanasthana, 7:10*, The type of unmada having etiology, premonitory symptoms, signs and symptoms, pain and favorable therapeutics (upashaya) different from those of the types of unmada caused by the vitiation of doshas are known to be of exogenous type. Some scholars hold the view that this type of unmada is caused by the effect of the activities of the past life. Lord Atreya considers intellectual errors as the causative factor

of this condition. Due to intellectual errors, the patient disregards the Gods, ascetics, ancestors, gandharvas, yakshas, rakshasas, pishachas, preceptors, elders, teachers and the other respectable ones. He also resorts to undesirable and inauspicious (or blasphemous) activities. The gods etc. cause unmada in him because of his own inauspicious activities. [10] *Charaka Sambhita, Nidanasthana* 7:10, नैव देवा न गन्धर्वा न पिशाचा न राक्षसाः, न चान्ये स्वयमक्लिष्टमुपक्लिशन्ति मानवम् ||१९|| *naiva deva na gandharva na pishacha na rakshasah, na chanye svayamaklishtamupaklisbnanti manavam* ||19|| Neither gods, nor gandharvas, nor pishachas nor rakshasas afflict a person who himself is free from misdeeds. The primary cause of unmada in an individual is the consequences of his own misdeeds and not other agents like the gods etc. [19] ये त्वेनमनुवर्तन्ते क्लियमानं स्वकर्मणा, न स तद्धेतुकः क्लेशो न ह्यस्ति कृतकृत्यात् ||२०|| *ye tvenamanuvarntante klishyamanam svakarmana, na sa taddhetukah klesho na hyasti krikatkrityata* ||20|| If the primary cause of unmada is misdeeds of the individual, then how could the causation of these exogenous unmada be attributed to divinities? Misdeeds committed already cannot be undone, but good deeds can pacify or neutralize the effects of these exogenous factors. [20] *Charaka Sambhita, Nidanasthana*, 7:19-20). Even, difficulties in pregnancy and birth of multiple pregnancies twins etc. and the differentiations in twins are due to previous *karmas* (*Charaka Sambhita, Sharirasthana*, 2: 14, 16 भिनत्ति यावद्बुधा प्रपन्नः शुक्रार्तवं वायुरतिप्रवृद्धः | तावन्त्यपत्यानि यथाविभागं कर्मात्मकान्यस्ववशात् प्रसूते ||१४|| *bhinatti yavadbudha prapannah shukrartavam vayuratipravruddhab | tavantypatyani yathavibhagam karmatmakanyasvavasat prasute* ||14|| The excessively aggravated *vayu* afflicting the union of sperm and ovum splits the zygote in various ways which results in multiple pregnancy. It is attributed to the effect of past deeds or destiny [14] कर्मात्मकत्वाद्विषमांशभेदाच्छुक्रासृजोर्वृद्धिमुपैति कुक्षौ | एकोऽधिको न्यूनतरो द्वितीय एवं यमेऽप्यभ्यधिको विशेषः ||१६|| *karmatmakatvadvishamamshabhedacchukrasrujo rrvruddhimupaiti kukshau | eko~adhiko nyunataro dritiya evam yame~apyabhyadbiko visheshab* ||16|| Due to past deeds and uneven division of the union of sperm and ovum, one among the twins is having better development in the womb while the other one is poorly developed. Thus, there is difference in the twins also. [16] (*Charaka Sambhita, Sharirasthana*, 2: 14,16)

13. न हि कर्म महत् किञ्चित् फलं यस्य न भुज्यते, क्रियाघ्नाः कर्मजा रोगाः प्रशमं यान्ति तत्क्षयात् *Na hi karma mahat kinchit phalam yasya na bhujyate, kriyaghna karmja rogah prashamam yanti tatkshyat* There is no such major action/deed (performed in the previous life/past time) which does not lead to the corresponding results. Diseases arising out of such actions/deeds are not amenable to any therapeutic measures. They are cured only after the effects of past actions/deeds are exhausted i.e. fully enjoyed. (*Charaka Sambhita, Sharira Sthana* 1: 117)
14. विद्या मित्रं प्रवासेषु भार्या मित्रं गृहेषु च । व्याधितस्यौषधं मित्रं धर्मो मित्रं मृतस्य च ॥ *vidya mitram pravaseshu bharya mitram gribeshu cha. vyadhitasyaushadham mitram dharmo mitram mrittasya cha.* (*Chankeya Niti* 5:15)
15. अनायासेन मरणं विनादैन्येन जीवनम्/ देहान्ते तव सायुज्यम् देहि मे परमेश्वर ॥ *anyasena maranam vinaadinyena jivanam / debhante tava sayujyam debhi me parameshvara* | Oh Supreme



Lord! Kindly grant me an easy death without any pain or illness, a non-miserable life to enable me to merge into You to attain liberation at the end of my life.

16. ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् | उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय माऽमृतात् || *Aum Tryambakam yajaamabe sugandhim pushtivardhanam |/ Urvaarukamiva bandhanaan-mrityormuksheeya maamritaat* || We worship the three-eyed One (Tryambaka), who is fragrant (as the Spiritual Essence) and who nourishes all. Like the fruit (cucumber tied to its creeper) falls off from the bondage of the stem (creepers/samsara), may we be liberated from death, from mortality (attachment to perishable things)!
17. For a biological system like a human body there is no difference between fasting and starvation but for a thinking entity there is a difference as fasting has religious connotation while starvation is human/ Govt failure.

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## CHAPTER 17

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# Pandemic Narratives of Re-dreaming and Self-becoming: Reading Pandemic Literature to Interpret the Condition of Indian Women

*Shubha Dwivedi*

### ABSTRACT

The recent pandemic of Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on the lives of women. From a gender standpoint, the year 2020 brought several ebbs and flows in its wake thus making the terrain of gender equality even craggier or rugged than ever. Being a part of a third world country, that is far from being gender-sensitive or egalitarian one couldn't feel astonished at the facts of continued marginalisation of women owing to spatial arrangements during the crisis. It could be clearly observed from the news reports and various surveys during the outbreak that women's lives were jeopardised in numerous ways; smothering their individuality and consciousness being only few ways of going about the whole subjugation process. Women were deprived of agency, especially minority women, and could not protest or raise their voices against injustices and sexual abuses hurled on them by the familiar and the strangers alike. The epidemic brought about cultural, economic, social, and political upheaval in its wake. Nonetheless, it impacted our responses to disasters, human fragility, and the consciousness of the peripherals. Consequently, a conscious reordering of the events during the pandemic and afterwards may aid in a better understanding of the crisis situation. It will also give us a clue to understand our deep inherent biases that often lead to racism, misogyny, xenophobia and gender iniquities. *The present paper, therefore, makes an attempt to understand the predicament of women during the most virulent pandemic in human history as well as their quest for an 'aesthetic space', an identity and a sense of 'self'. Through different ways of 'self-expression' women, children, the differently abled and the marginalised people tried to comprehend, cope and contest the challenges put up by the calamitous situation.* The study is concerned with locating female voices in pandemic or lockdown literature. *It thus, investigates the trajectory of gender-*

*equality in its Indian territory via the prism of 'feminine,' 'female,' and 'feminist' viewpoints through critical interaction with multiple narratives of 'self-becoming.'*

*Keywords:* Gender-Equality, Individuality, Pandemic, Peripheral, Aesthetic Space

*The dreams of the oppressed are planted in the earth and watered through all the bitter seasons. Their suffering could make them farmers of dreams. Their harvest could make the world more just and beautiful. It is only the oppressed who have this sort of difficult and paradoxical responsibility.*

Ben Okri (A Way of Being Free, London, Phoenix House, 1997)

## INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic Covid-19 with its gendered impact became a defining event for individuals who faced several inequities, exclusions, and dangers in their battle for survival. In light of the important arguments about the continuance and permanence of life amid adversity, it is necessary to understand humanity's ongoing struggle for meaning and dignity. While the pandemic sparked various critical debates in its aftermath, one of the central issues was the position of women during the crisis, as public health systems, social welfare institutions, the media, scientific research, and official figures obliterated and erased evidence of their presence. Contrary to the widely held belief that pandemics were "the great leveller," equally affecting individuals regardless of gender, colour, country origin, or sexual orientation, several studies have conclusively established that 'privilege structured pandemic narratives' (Carol Hay). With the burgeoning need to narrate the pandemic experience, we see the emergence of serious literary voices that intrigue, challenge, and inspire us with their literary sensibility and the power of the written word. Arundhati Roy in her essay "The Pandemic is a Portal" investigates how the novel coronavirus brought life to a halt in India and how the world's superpowers as well as developing economies dealt with it. Talking about the socio-economic impact of the tragedy she observes: "Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. ... And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves." Additionally, she elucidates that pandemics have altered people's and nations' perceptions over time, and they are to be viewed as "a portal, a gateway between one world and the next." On the one hand, the pandemic curtailed human potential; on the other hand, it opened doors to change and development. It left us with a choice between an

imperfect world filled with hatred and violence and a true utopia to be founded on the pillars of equality, liberty and fraternity. “We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcass of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it,” Roy notes.

Merriam-Webster defines pandemic “as an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and typically affects a significant proportion of the population.” According to the WHO, a pandemic is defined as the “worldwide spread of a new disease.” Oxford Dictionary describes it “as a disease prevalent over a whole country or the world.” By its very nature pandemic implied unexpected threat to life as well as lives as it caused world-wide illness and also loss of several lives and livelihoods. The illness itself triggered a lot of apprehension, anxiety amidst people all over the world. The world was closing in around. Everyone was perturbed about their health, well-being and future. In such times of misery and helplessness, one could turn one’s thought inwards for hope, consolation as was explicated through various writings by women during this time.

During the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the literary world witnessed a spurt in women’s writings and writings about women and the ‘feminist poetics’ of these works prompted some unsettling questions. These works not only served as a scathing indictment of the patriarchal society entrenched in societal institutions, but also proved their unflinching commitment to women’s rights and issues. Given the unprecedented nature of recent pandemic, it was imperative to chronicle the anxiety and the fear that the situation had elicited. The present paper investigates the lives of women during the most virulent pandemic in human history as well as their quest for an ‘aesthetic space’, an ‘identity’ and a sense of ‘self.’ Avijit Ghosh writes about the importance of literature written during the times of crisis, “Literature provides us with the most profound and informative record of pandemic events and seeks to provide relief in times of need.” Indeed, literature helps people recover from the most serious human tragedies, such as pandemics, epidemics and diseases and pestilences, which take civilisations by surprise. Literature produces a record or testimony of survival by capturing the mindscape of artists who sensitively portray the plight of their fellow denizens. As a



consequence, the paper will focus on the legitimate voices speaking out about women's plight, their struggle for survival and their questioning of the social status quo while imprisoned in patriarchal enclosures. The paper will take into account the various literary works attempted by women at this time which are veritable sources of personal narratives of courage and self-discovery. These works are musings of empowered souls on abrupt endings and new beginnings.

Believing in the great transformative value of literature, the present paper focuses on the various dispersed meditations as well as self-conscious articulations, which concurrently bring awareness about the suffering and oppression of women during times of crisis. Literature of a particular time, age, period records the subjective experiences of the individuals thus creating authentic records of a 'lived' and 'experienced' reality. During pandemic many women narrativized their own experiences of solitude, suffering, vulnerability and marginalisation while others documented the stories of 're-dreaming' and 'self-becoming.' For a lot of women literature worked as therapy as it also allowed them to get hold over their vulnerabilities and helped them reclaim their psycho-social well-being.

The recent pandemic of Covid-19 has had an unparalleled impact on the lives of women. From a gender viewpoint, the year 2020 touched several low points and thus made the question of gender equality even more pertinent in the given scenario. According to reports by Oxfam pandemic worsened gender inequality in India. Another report from unfpa.org cites that around 243 million women and young girls were subjected to sexual or physical or domestic violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months and there were a large number of women who experienced anxiety, anger, fear, alienation, irritability and a heightened sense of unimportance and nothingness due to social and emotional distancing and absolutely no mental health support. The pandemic brought extreme curbs on women's movement outside the homes. Women were deprived of agency, especially minority women, and could not protest or raise their voices against injustices and sexual abuse hurled on them by the familiar and the strangers alike. The pandemic resulted in cultural, economic, social and political marginalisation for a wide section of women. Nonetheless, it shaped our responses to calamities, to human vulnerability, and the consciousness of the peripherals.

Accordingly, it has been felt by psychologists, sociologists and litterateurs that a conscious reordering of the events held during the pandemic and afterwards may lead to a better understanding of the crisis situation. This is also intended to provide an insight into our ingrained biases which frequently manifest as racism, misogyny, xenophobia and gender iniquities. Several heinous occurrences happened throughout the continuing epidemic, demonstrating the devious workings of regressive minds and institutions. Quite significantly, the pandemic led to women's subordination and slowed the wheels of change or gender equality.

The pandemic affected women of all ages, background, classes, profession, race and ethnicity as they were excluded from the 'public spaces' and did not have protection in 'private spaces' either. As crime within homes multiplied, women could no longer feel safe within the so-called 'safe havens' or 'sanctuaries' referred to as homes. With the surge in online activities women's lives were further restricted and their interests were channelised to traditional gender roles: cooking, stitching, sewing, decoration of house, cleaning, grooming and creating pleasant atmosphere at home. Women were compelled to work long hours at home and had to give up their desire for personal happiness, health and leisure activities. While the mass movement or migration of labourers brought all of humanity to shame, one could only wonder about the pitiable state of women labourers who kept walking for several days at a stretch and jeopardised their health, safety and lives. The pandemic has reinforced our thinking about women's condition on the fringes of society and the inability of the state to provide a safe environment for them. Furthermore, the recession caused by the Covid-19 disproportionately affected women. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, during the pandemic women have lost their jobs at 1.8 times the rate of men. The losses faced by women during this time have left long and deep scars over their career profile. According to a report by the Time, 2.3 million women have left the workforce since February 2020 for parental concerns and caregiving being the chief reasons. 1 in every 3 women is the proportion of women who were not working in July and who cited childcare as the reason.

Significantly, writing becomes a therapy for an overworked mind as can be seen in the writings of Meenkakshi Madhavan Reddi, a blogger and fiction writer, as she humorously takes on pandemic life or the wander less years: "None of my dreams feature masks or

social distancing, we're all just going about our lives, touching and being crowded together in public transport. I think it's telling that a TV show has apparently reached into my subconscious and needs to be processed and apparently, Covid needs no processing at all. (My spell check is putting a curly red line under COVID, which makes me wonder how long before it is an official word recognised by dictionaries." Thus, she makes sense of life's incongruities and disparities in an ironic mode.

Covid-19 has been an unusual inspiration for authors. The virus and its consequences, the quarantine experience, the eager wait for the antidote, the yearnings for the normal life are constantly being written about in fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Individual and collective experiences of the lockdown and the chaos, horror, anxiety, and depression that resulted have spawned a new literary form – lockdown literature. Dr. Ritu Kamra Kumar records her impressions about the apocalyptic pandemic in the strongest terms. Dr. Kumar vividly depicts the horror and unrelenting struggle humanity endured against a faceless foe during this period:

Starving mobs, silent sighs, unattended on the road  
 Struggle for survival, half promises, one meal, no abodes  
 Mutilated hopes, masked pain, withering cheeks, sadly they nod  
 Worn out faces, wiped out tears, alas! Destinies are forged  
 Primordial survival instinct preceding over laissez faire  
 War against a micro-organism. Holding human life in future. (20)

The writings of women poets, journalists, historians, sociologists about these times serve as a testimony to the marginalised experience and can be seen interrogating the hetero normative, androcentric forces that belittle women's experiences and disregard women's desires as well as rights. Women's writings thus, offer a unique perspective on the female experience. They inevitably investigate the position of women in society and also offer alternative models of women empowerment. The literature of this time focuses on the social, legal and political marginalisation of women and their deprivation of any definitive supportive resources from the institutions of government or society. Additionally, it discussed women's needs, capabilities, rights, intellect, and their creative side. And furthermore, it draws attention to the harm caused by submissive domestic life, which is a significant impediment to their self-realisation.

While delving into the reasons for women's subordination and dislocation, which were exacerbated by unforeseen circumstances, one could easily infer that creation of literature or writing in general, whether in print or digital formats or for self-satisfaction, provided women with a safe space, an outlet to vent their worst fears and a forum to discuss their dreams and aspirations. The pandemic hit world was a world in which there was a total collapse of order, the public and the private merged and there was a gradual suppression of women by the market forces and patriarchy that controlled their speech, action, movement, choices and thus deprived them of their individuality. To combat this state of affairs, a significant number of Indian women authors devoted to the reorganisation of female subjectivity stepped forth with their tales of perseverance and strength, injecting hope and clarity of understanding during these challenging times. These inspirational stories struck a chord with the majority of women who suffered in silence from loneliness and unspeakable anguish. These works enabled them 'locate' those unheard voices who were clamouring for social, economic and cultural freedom in their feeble yet consistent cries. With their persuasive and committed writings, poets and writers such as Sukrita Paul Kumar, Meenakshi Mohan, Shamayita Sen, Usha Akeela, Meenakshi Madhavan Reddi, N. Ramamani Sampath, Tanisha Saxena, Harnidh Kaur, Kusum Lata Sawhney, Manjula Bisht, and Rashmi Bhardwaj have been able to create and spread sensitivity on the matter. These writers have demonstrated remarkable courage, compassion, piety and large heartedness as they voice the contemporary reality with simplicity, courage, humility and a sense of responsibility. Their stories depict the emotional and social realities of the time. Some of the poems raise debate on the issue of domesticity and challenge the traditional notions of it. The ideology of domesticity and the assigning of sphere of household to women as their proper place is something that needs to be challenged. Many of these writers question the images of the ideal domestic woman as pious, pure, submissive and devoted to the harmonious functioning of the home. Many works bring out the double consciousness that women inhabit; women see and think in terms of culture yet have always another consciousness, another potential language. These works ostensibly put under attack the dualisms institutionalised in patriarchy, culture/nature, public/private, death /birth, mind/ body, man/woman and so on and so forth. Shamyita Sen points out that

poetry helped her to heal during the pandemic. It also helped her battle isolation, grief and loss. Her poems are informed by the consciousness of reality within a gendered spectrum and a sharp, incisive commentary on cultural milieu.

Some days my tongue is a knot,  
 On another, my hair.  
 Hair knots are easy to hold,  
 While dragging her from one  
 Room to another. The husband,  
 An enraged ball of purple haze,  
 Unwilling to think straight.

Arguably, the poem brings into focus the all-pervasiveness of gender-based violence and the authoritative role men play in a gender unequal world. It's the biggest paradox of humanity that during the pandemic many women in their roles as primary caregivers at home and as medical attendants in hospitals were still attacked and denied their agency. While society was heavily dependent on such women for their care and support, they could still not accord them their rightful due.

Women's experience of deprivation and discrimination continued during the global crisis when the resources were constrained and economy took a downturn. Studies show that due to fall in the family income many girls dropped out of schools, colleges and many lost their livelihood. There was also a speculation that many young girls were forced into an early marriage and many women chose work beneath their abilities and qualification to survive their families from starvation and destitution. The patriarchal oppression was at its worst as it deprived women not their independence but education, career and even the simplest and most innocent of joys like socialisation and mingling with their friends, relatives and colleagues. During this time women faced uncountable hardships and the false sense of honour and dominance of men prevailed on women in their vulnerable state and subjected them to all kinds of physical, mental violence. A careful study of the lives of women during this period shows that women receded into zone of silence due to apathy, negligence and discriminatory attitude of society. While young girls were denied nourishment and meaningful engagement, the older women too were subjected to life of denial and their health and rightful existence in the family were threatened.

It was during this time that one could quite often notice women praying for the inclusion and rights of affected humanity. Beyond their productive, reproductive and social roles they could be seen as guardian angels of the world who could establish peace and harmony in the midst of chaos and uncertainty. In “Ganga Dialogues in Corona Times”, Sukrita Paul Kumar, an eminent Indian English poet, prays to the river Ganga for the safety and well-being of everyone:

The world is coming to an end O Ganga,  
 Not with an atom or nuclear bomb  
 Nor with an earthquake or floods  
 Not with a sudden jolt  
 But as a gradual spread of  
 First of fear and then of asphyxiation  
 .....  
 Carrying babies and sacks of deflated dreams  
 Dragging bleeding heels  
 All those thousands  
 Homeward bound  
 Unlike the kafilas in 1947  
 These have definite homes  
 Even if without roofs or walls  
 Like you, O ganga  
 Fixated and resolute  
 They move on  
 Leaving behind the  
 Blinding urban glitter.  
 .....  
 The war with the deadly virus has begun  
 Say, if you have a solution  
 O Ganga  
 Give us signs for the survival of the species

(In an article titled Covid 19 and Gender Equality-The Impact on Women & Girls ([interactive.unwomen.org/covid/gender-impact](https://interactive.unwomen.org/covid/gender-impact)))

Sukrita’s “Ganga Dialogue” is an ardent prayer to the holiest and legendary river goddess that engages with the lives of suffering humanity and the subcontinent’s history before the pandemic years. Universally revered as the goddess of purification and forgiveness, the mere sight of this sacred river liberates one from the shackles of life and death: ‘Gange tav darshanat muktih’. The poet implores the river goddess to review the suffering humanity’s tribulations and afflictions. At its core, the poem expresses the poet’s empathy for humanity on the move; for migrant domestic workers who have been shorn of their wages, livelihood, and dignity in urban centres. Correspondingly, the poem closes by describing how both Ganga and

humanity face the threat of loss of identities in the wake of diseases, pollution, and mindless rapid urbanisation. The struggle between life and death is what defines both the river and civilisation's magnificent journey on this earth. Sukrita's poem is an impassioned plea to the river goddess to restore wellness, sanctity, peace and serenity in a diseased world.

Many poems and stories dwell on the lopsided labour division within the Indian household exposing the enhanced burden of household toil within the families. According to a 2015 survey by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, an Indian Woman does more unpaid work nearly six hours each day on average than her peers in most other countries. Indian men however, are known to be spending less than an hour each day. During coronavirus times, a poem by an anonymous poet became popular on social media which serves to explain the disparity. The content of this poem makes one ponder lots of things:

I heard that we are in the same boat.  
 But its not like that.  
 We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat.  
 Your ship can be shipwrecked and mine might not be. Or vice versa.  
 For some, quarantine is optimal; a moment of reflection of re-connection. Easy in flip-flops, with a whisky or tea.  
 For others, this is desperate crisis.  
 For others, it is facing loneliness.

The poem has tried to depict the paradoxical situations that shook and scared one out of wits. While some were privileged enough to bake sour bread and whip dalgona coffee, others struggled for mere crumbs. While some wanted to go back to work because they were running out of money, others wanted to punish those who dared to break the quarantine. The poem ends with a request not to judge anyone from a preferred angle and how everyone should navigate their route with 'respect, empathy and responsibility.'

Shamayita Sen released her debut collection of poems, *For The Hope of Spring*, at the beginning of the year, focusing on female experiences such as loss, anger, fear, and unspoken feelings. The gender politics of India's households, as well as the unequal division of labour, have been highlighted in numerous stories and papers available on the internet and websites. According to an international Labour Organisation Report, in 2018 women in urban India spent 312 minutes a day on unpaid care work whereas men did it for 29

minutes. In villages, it was 291 minutes for women as against 32 minutes for men.

Subarna Ghosh, author and activist, delves into the gender politics that pervade Indian households and explains: “My husband has started helping me with chores. He understood I was very affected by it, that it was bothering me a lot,” she gets into the root cause of the problem and states, “But our men are also victims of this culture and society. They have not been trained to do housework. They require a little bit of hand-holding.” Fed up of cooking, cleaning and doing laundry she wrote a petition to Prime minister Narendra Modi urging him to intervene and “to address the issue in his next speech” and “to encourage all Indian men to do an equal share of housework.”

It’s worth noting that during the lockdown, there was a surge in the number of blogs, vlogs, YouTube videos, and open mic. events, which helped people, especially women and other marginalised people, cope with the mounting stress. This period also saw the emergence of the domestic labour debate, possibly sparked by Margarate Benston’s book *The Political Economy of Women* in 1969 whereby Bernston had emphasised the importance of including housework in any study of economic processes, rather than relegating it to a minor or non-existent position as Marx and Engels had done. Maggie Humm in her *Dictionary of Feminist Theory* opined that housework needed to be valued as active labour and, at the same time could be construed as a source of exploitation and capital accumulation. Many feminists’ writings of the pandemic era critically question the value and institutionalisation of motherhood as a vital form of women’s oppression. While reading these poems of suppressed anger and revolt one is reminded of the following lines from Warsan Shire’s “The House” from *Her blue Body*:

“Mother says there are locked rooms inside all women; kitchen of lust, bedroom of grief, bathroom of apathy. Sometimes, the men – they come with keys,/ and sometimes, the men-they come with hammers.”

Young poet Tanisha Saxena talks about her windowless chamber during the nationwide lockdown and how it encouraged her to peep within and collect her thoughts and feelings in the form of poetry. Like many others in a capital city of Delhi she is not privileged enough to have a room facing lush garden or picturesque sights it is rather a room without windows but apparently not without a view as she made good use of the isolation. “The absence of windows does



save me from distraction, and I'm really able to concentrate on my reading and writing," proclaimed the young woman.

A Hindi poet Minu Bakshi, points out the collective experience of pandemic in her latest one-minute shayari or poems written during the pandemic:

Raftaar karo kam, ke bachenge to milenge; Gulshan na rahega to kahan  
phool khilenge (Slow down the speed, we will meet if we survive; If there  
are no gardens left, where will the flowers bloom?)

She strongly believes that human beings have really taken nature and life into their hands and their mindless action have caused the havoc. She brings out the whole politics of nature/nurture and the systematic exploitation of nature as well as women by patriarchal forces into the purview of gender debate during the pandemic. According to Bakshi, pandemic is a warning bell for the self-intoxicated humans who have disrupted the natural order of things and imperilled the harmonious coexistence of all beings.

Thus, pandemic forced women to rediscover their past in relation with their sordid present and eventually pushed them to write and reorganise themselves with the consciousness of their position as women. They could hereby develop a sense of collective identity too.

Priya Sarukkai Chhabria talks about the necessity to talk:

We must talk remembering love, summoning its hands on us as we sing  
from siren perches *come die against me please* or break off, each a wailing wall  
submerged in murk while skin pours incense.

We must talk over my swell of fear and your tide of neglect, casual in its  
sweep. But do you want to swim *past its rich rewards* to see me reappear?  
Alarm whimpers in me saying darken, dive, disappear.

We must talk beyond hope to look at what may be. Around us glitter gifts  
– our life of years together – as litter. Spare grace. Could we build on  
flotsam yet?

Can we net phosphorescence? *What's your take?*

We must talk of anguish caused that so weeps to hide its face while shame  
seeps from entrails to lustrate me in inkiness; a black beacon to which  
your regret is a lifejacket hurriedly hurled just out of reach. *Is it deliberate,  
my sweet?*

Thus, many poems with a pronounced emphasis on participation in talks seem to be suggesting conversation as a strategy to cope with distress, illness or anxiety. Silence, whether compelled or not, is now rejected in favour of self-expression as a form of humanistic or holistic therapy.

Manjula Bisht, a Hindi poet, articulates the shared existential anxieties brought forth by the worldwide epidemic. In the poems below, she refers to the universality of human fear, pain, and agony, which cohesively can serve as a cautionary tale to humanity about its exploitative overtures with nature's resources. Both poems capture the paranoia, morbid fear, and danger that the pandemic era has brought about as a result of man's hostility toward nature and civilisation as a whole.

## THE PANDEMIC ERA

### (I)

Today  
 The corpse of every country is utterly lonely  
 The sheer, stark fear of every nation is one  
 One earth  
 One sky  
 One is the hue of the water.  
 A common taste is that of tears  
 One is the joy of returning home safely  
 If nature,  
 Is being so strict,  
 To bring home this message  
 We are under no obligation  
 to give it another chance.

### (II)

Just imagine of  
 what you might think  
 While battling this invisible adversary  
 Of the twenty-first century  
 that  
 your death is imminent  
 Believe me  
 With just a semblance of life, in imagination  
 following this demise  
 You will understand the meaning  
 of being a human being. (My translations from the original Hindi)

Quite significantly, these works bring into consideration lives across the divides of caste, class, religion and nationality and their experiences concerning COVID-19, physical frailty, psycho-social well-being, emotional insecurity, dislocation, discrimination, loss, anxiety to livelihood, safety, security, sexuality, marriage, parenting

depravities related to learning, lack of socialisation, social security and existential angst.

The pandemic gave us a chance to review the idea of the home and the domestic with respect to women's suffering and isolation. The home was no longer a safe haven or a sanctuary where one could repose one's feelings or feel protected and settled. Disproportionate labour, loss of jobs, cuts in salaries, loss of work home balance, over exhaustion due to extra care work in addition to professional responsibilities, increase in domestic labour, violence within the home are the various realities of the times during lockdown. National commission for women has also come up with statistics that shows increase in domestic violence. While the image of migrant women and workers travelling by foot tugging their kids became an international news, very less was done to improve their fate.

Eminent contemporary writer and well-known icon of popular culture Shobha De has analysed the life of myriad women during the pandemic in her latest collection of 24 stories and internal monologues, titled *Lockdown Liaisons*. She observes "India's extraordinary women are displaying courage and resilience. Migrant women are walking thousands of kilometres to reach their villages. Many are young mothers hoping for help that may never arrive." Her #lockdownchronicleswithshobhaade featured tales of optimism, desperation, which also provided an overview of the current socioeconomic and political state of affairs. All of the stories accurately depict the terror, anger, depression, and tragedy that were all too normal back then. These stories represent the lives of women from various cross sections of society. The impact of the pandemic is portrayed rather poignantly by Shobhaa Dey, as she states: "Most of the characters, like most of us, are still coming to terms with the tumultuous emotional and financial changes brought on by a lethal virus that has paralysed the world. Everything is obsessed with just one thing, survival! I have tried to capture these mixed feelings through the different characters." The stories of her new collection vividly depict the emotional and psychological failings and weaknesses of various people as they are swept up in a bizarre pandemic scenario. The stories raise concerns about issues such as lust, thwarted desire and even marital rape.

Rupi Kaur, a notable Indian English poet, puts forth tales of women's struggle, quandary, and survival tactics in a searching manner.

Our backs  
 Tell stories  
 No books have  
 The spine  
 To carry.

Harnidh Kaur's poem on coronavirus is an appeal to people to remain humane during the pandemic. She also makes an earnest appeal to all to express themselves in order to overcome the negativity and pandemic blues:

Poetry that reminds you of sunshine and the way cloud unfurls over the sea books that you've been meaning to read for years and never had time to. Affection you bottled up for so many months: now is the time to let it fizz and pour over all the words you've stopped yourself from saying.

Things to stockpile:

Courage. Laughter. Kindness-to others, and  
 To ourselves. Music that makes the world look brighter and gentler than it feels. numbers of everyone you miss.

It was heartening to see many women, regardless of caste, class, or economic barriers, rising up and performing acts of bravery in response to patriarchal oppression and domination. Uma Chakravarti (2003) in her work titled *Gendering Caste* has argued that more than anything it is the cultural oppression of women that seems to be defining their fates in India. Manisha Priyam, Krishna Banerjee et al talk about the cultural oppression of women under the conditions of patriarchy in the following words:

“Patriarchy seems to deny women subjectivity, and thereby dignity and personhood. Historically women's perspectives have not been heard or represented. They have not had the power to become producers of cultural symbols. Of course, women, like all oppressed groups, have tried to create their own worlds in which they have a measure of power that they use to reinterpret the world around them. Lacking in subjectivity has implied that women are seen as actively involved in the creation of anything meaningful. Their experiences and expressions are considered not worth recording nor are they considered legitimate.”

Kumkum Sangari and Vaid too, point out that the lives of women in India exist at the interface between caste and class inequality. Furthermore, the management and control of female sexuality is the most important mechanism of controlling women, and maintaining and reproducing social inequality. Stuti Parichha's poem is a further exposition of women's experience of subordination and alienation within patriarchal structures:

Within the walls of our homes,  
 we see our life flash by.  
 So close to childhood memories,  
 as we play them on our whimsy.  
 That life has given us a bit more than busy streets and errands,  
 The second inning in this match came in our pursuit of what is apparent.  
 In locked out rooms in helplessness do we see the true appetite,  
 To pursue abandoned books and rhyme something new.  
 That power to defer is no longer with us,  
 stillness to be crossed for bonds to renew.  
 Obligated for affordable fears,  
 we witness the catastrophe in despair.  
 The shelter that comforts can nurture demons beyond repair.  
 Dreams must wait, patience must be borrowed.  
 Let's float invitations to this required marriage as blues are to be conceded  
 not embraced.  
 From deep paths of our neurons, a single thought prevails.  
 For in this formidable moments the plainness of heart reveals,  
 channels of love make our life surreal.

Since times immemorial, the notions of women as honour, markers and reproducers of communities has increased the community's control over women. As a result, women are susceptible to all kinds of violence and brutality. In a patriarchal country like India violence against women is multifaceted and largely remains hidden due to women's concealed role in other women's subordination and oppression. Although women perform two thirds of the world's work, receive ten percent of the world's income and own one percent of the means of production, their position and status in society is disappointing. Women from the lower castes and lower rungs of society have to make more adjustments for survival in conventional system. The various narratives show a complete scrutinisation and dehumanisation of women as domestic workers or slaves in the worst form. Women during the pandemic would make up for a heart wrenching narrative that would raise many issues in ethicality, legality and human rights to say the least.

Interestingly, as a standalone account, one of the many unfortunate girls who went through different ordeals during the lockdown, Jyoti, the 16-year-old girl cycled her ailing father from Haryana to Bihar for 1,200 kilometres during the lockdown and was awarded the bravery award on the Republic Day. Her award citation stated that Jyoti's fortitude and strength could not be adequately conveyed in words. The pandemic's history in India is rich with such

instances of female bravery, as women overcoming personal anguish went above and beyond to assist others.

Many women poets, thinkers, writers tried to make sense of the lockdown experience. Many women composed verses of hope. Their compositions described the hardships, atrocities and alienation that were a common fate for women across all categories. N. Ramamani Sampath, a poet from Bangalore portrays the life of a slum dweller during the pandemic induced lockdown experience in the poem titled “A slumdweller’s After Thoughts”:

Nothing will deter our spirits folks  
 No matter how hard the forces did.  
 Push us into cluttered holes  
 Provide us not the minimal needs  
 Yet we try to shoot out strong  
 Clinging on hopes far too long  
 No hassles to walk our narrow paths  
 To hazard us in your risky tasks

From extreme oppression and alienation women rose to raise their protest against the forced norms of domesticity and gender subordination to an advocacy of rights and entitlements and finally, there is this phase of self-discovery, a turning in, getting freed from dependence and a search for identity through creative expression. Usha Akeela, a progressive poet, expresses the pandemic reality in more nuanced ways in her poignant verses. In the poem titled “7.8 Billion Caved,” she recounts:

The mind is like an abacus now  
 computing deaths on the excel sheet  
 of consciousness; from the Spanish flu 20-50 million,  
 from the Black Plague 50 million, from Covid ...  
 What black hole continues to gorge up souls...

She is, however, cognizant of the pandemic’s blessings, as people band together, cling to their families, and draw ultimate strength from one another in trying times. In the poem “Reemergence,” she vividly portrays pandemic life, emphasising the necessity of family acceptance for psychological well-being:

We retreat and reemerge from our rooms  
 like waves meeting by the shore of the window,  
 this dance of three happens daily now  
 like three needles crocheting a new pattern of reality.  
 Simple human actions, eating together, cooking, washing dishes,  
 a new alphabet in an unhurried world  
 of harmony, kinship and family – we are reconfigured

in a lucent house breathing a cornucopia of light,  
 limpid walls and tiles seem fluid like water  
 rippling a chiaroscuro, outside,  
 that – the red streak of a cardinal's winged surge,  
 that – the squirrels serrated scampering on trunks,  
 that – the unhurried drift of a dandelion.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above analysis, one can conclude that Pandemic literature is an affirmation of life and documents women's journey from self-denial and self-doubt to self-realisation. These works raise questions on the presentation of femininity in conventional forms and treat all kinds of violence against women as heinous crimes. These works also try to protect and preserve the idea of the womanhood with all its potential and prospects. It is glaringly evident that women's works conceptualised during this period express collective indignation against the retrograde system by vocalising their vehement resistance to gender-based injustices. These women are not scared of men's perceptions and interpretations and even miscalculations. Women's creativity is regulated by the restrictions of their emotions. Many women poets of this era brought to light the repressive experience of being a woman and the lack of agency to articulate it. Their poetry serves as a vehicle for catharsis because they make a conscious attempt to self-heal via a compassionate view on one's own life and the world at large. A virus prompted us to investigate a variety of subjects from multiple perspectives. And when women poets became aware of the cause of gender equality, they took tangible measures and shared their observations and judgments with other astute individuals. Many of these writers have strong dissenting voices, whereas others have included critical observations on genuine problems such as resource mismanagement during the epidemic, growing consumerism among the affluent, and capitalism and materialism into their thought processes. Memories of individual lives and communities get encapsulated in the myriad stories written by women at this time. While a majority of these writings end on a positive and hopeful note, they also serve as constant reminders of the dingy reality. A lot of these writings describe circular pitiful life with no escape, emphasising the repressed psychological state of women caught up in diverse circumstances. As a large cross section of women were forced to confront the brutal truths these writers provided a slice of life by conjuring up images of

horror, physical, mental, social upheaval, objectification and commodification of women, and thus outlining several key issues relating to women oppression and subjugation.

While reading and appreciation of the pandemic literature presupposes sensitivity and a certain objectivity to track and measure the iniquity and injustice inherent in structures and institutions, one could trace the responses of women writers to Showalter's definition of development of women's literary tradition here which appropriately refers to three stages of, feminine, Feminist and Female suggesting phases of imitation/internalisation, protest and self-discovery. Despite being a mirror image of the dismal times, the literature of the pandemic era contains messages of hope and renewal. It is commendable that so many women decided to express, chronicle, document, and analyse life's vicissitudes and possibilities in the most cherish able form and method. And, in the final analysis, literature justifies life; it validates life; it is a clarification of life, our race, our nation, our history, our civilisation and our culture. In the end, pandemic literature is to be viewed as a credible document about life and rejuvenation. Consequently, this literature would inspire future generations about life's struggle and impart an essential lesson in re-dreaming and self-becoming in the indefatigable spirit of men and women of this age. Audre Lorde's following comment can be referred to understand and validate the critical need for pandemic women's writing as a new genre to achieve a more just world order:

*For women, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action.*

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## CHAPTER 18

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# Women Migrant Workers during the COVID-19 Lockdown

*Vaishali*

### ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to focus primarily upon the outbreak of novel Coronavirus in China and through this forefront the issues and problems faced by women migrant workers in India. As we know that India is a land of culture and courage and this courage was shown by migrant workers in this crucial time of COVID-19. They were bound to migrate as Lockdown was announced in March 2020 where thousands of them return to their homeland in search of safety from this pandemic. They have faced financial difficulty and women migrants especially tolerated the financial as well as physical one. The paper questions the authority of women in this male dominated world or will they ascertain their own identity or not. Power structures is discussed through women migrant workers. Nothing was safe for them neither outside nor inside home but still they managed to overcome in this difficult phase of life. Workers are the pillars of nation and women workers are its soul but they are witnessing the inflation because of COVID-19. We have also talked about 'New Normal' and Ayurvedic treatment in our daily lives as there is no accurate vaccine to cure this disease and also migrants can afford this type of treatment at home itself.

*Keywords:* Novel Coronavirus, Migrant, Workers, Lockdown, Pandemic, Homeland, Women, Power, Society, Inflation, New Normal, Ayurvedic

### INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has united the world in a suffering way and it shows the pathos and hardships of the migrants. Coronavirus pandemic is a new challenge in front of an entire world. The British author Charles Dickens' *A Tale of the Two Cities* (1859) opening line states "It was the best of times/it was the worst of times" meaning that the human race got the chance to rethink and reimagine that why this pandemic happened. This pandemic causes human, economic, and social crises.

The economic crunch causes fewer employment opportunities for migrants especially for women who are now the worst victims among migrants. The lockdown leads to social distancing which causes loss of emotional values and relationships got tensed in this time of crisis.

A new virus was identified in Wuhan city, Hubei province in China with the patients affected with symptoms like dry cough, fever, lung problem, etc. Fever (87.9%) and coughs (67.7%) were the most common symptoms to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. The origin of this virus was not identified and was pretty much assumed to be spread from Wuhan Seafood Market and with animals like bat and snake. A supposed theory was that the transmission chain started from bats to humans. Later WHO (World Health Organisation) declared this disease as pandemic on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, posing a high risk to various other countries. The news shook the other nations and lockdown was imposed upon us which not even disturb the people but the economy also. It arises question like when this lockdown will get over? Why the government is not able to control it? They should have cancelled the air ways programmes and it entered in India through Air means. Despite of these queries we are still into it and it's the end of December 2020 and we living with this COVID-19.

Since the beginning of the crisis in the world, we have been told by authorities, the media, and pretty much everyone else to Stay Home. Social media profiles with hashtags like #StayHomeStaySafe have become akin to a badge of honor. Add to those the wartime metaphors politicians are using and the message crystal clear: our grandfathers saved our homelands by going to war, now we can save them by staying indoors. If we are good, law-abiding citizens we can curb the spread of the virus and save lives. If we flaunt the rules people will die. But we have witnessed people disobeying the rules provided by government. In terms of mask wearing people are wearing it but more in their 'own' way. They will wear it but put it down while talking, wipe their nose by removing it, take it out several times or not washing it. The government is trying but it is with the people to abide by it.

For those who belong to traditional family structures and/or have a steady income, obeying the quarantine means having to work from home, keeping up with chores, taking care of children, and perhaps organising care for elderly family members. It also means missing out

on classes and social activities, enduring the stress of remaining indoors, and postponing that much-needed vacation. Single parents and those living day by day, meanwhile, are still to an extent protected by social welfare systems – things may be more complicated but for most, they are probably still bearable. It's hardly ideal for either camp, but for those inside the social safety net or the regulated economy #StayHomeStaySafe probably still means staying safe at home.

### **WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS DURING COVID-19**

India has been under the biggest lockdown with around 1.3 billion people asked to stay home because of the *Coronavirus* pandemic. The nationwide lockdown was initially imposed from March 25 to April 14 but was later extended till May 31 in various phases to contain the spread of the deadly disease. As non-essential economic activity has ground to a halt, the lockdown has hit millions of people working in the informal sector. Our societal response to COVID-19 has revealed a lot about who we value in society, and what we are prepared to do to protect the lives of others. How responses to the pandemic have played out has particularly illuminated the injustices that women migrant workers endure globally because of being 'second sex'. The possible reason for this could be that the public domain is largely designed, navigated, and dominated by men. Women are a newbie and their position in the public space is still contested.

The world is facing the two-front war, especially India, one is of coronavirus and the other of migration which we can see as the second partition after India-Pakistan partition in 1947. The migrants were facing the loss of life and it is crucial to discuss this issue. Migrant laborers are people who travel from their states of domicile to other states in the country in search of jobs and livelihood. In India, migration of laborers has been taking place for more than a century, but the numbers have seen an exponential rise in the last 30 years. Most of these migrants are daily wage earners and constitute the large unorganised sector that is marked by low wages, unfriendly working hours, lack of any labor contract whatsoever, and absence of any social welfare or employee welfare scheme. The lockdown in India has so far impacted 40 million migrant workers, with over 40 percent being illiterate and already working low-paying jobs, this pandemic has left them with a great sense of hopelessness.

The women migrants faced hardships and their contributions have been severely underappreciated. Women have contributed to the

gaps in the labor economy and lifted the age population by contributing to technological and human capital. There is a 3 years survey accomplished by the Centre of Women's Development Studies (CWDS) in 20 states of India about female labor migration defining the women's employment and economic status. It shows that among 66.6 million labor migrants there are 9.6 million women labor migrants working for cooperating the 15 percent of the labor economy. Agriculture is the most prominent destination for rural women migrants and in the year 2007-2008 shows female share in agriculture around 27.22 percent which is more than the male share. Now what will happen to agriculture in this pandemic, the climate shifts cause loss to agriculture, and nowadays attack of locust (Tiddi dal) in fields caused a huge sum of damage to field and if this issue of agriculture cannot be rethink then we will again hit hard by another crisis.

This corona pandemic stands to threaten all layers of basic needs and each of these core needs has damaging consequences on mental health and resulting economic downturn has negatively affected many people's mental health. Men and women both got affected but women suffer the most especially the women migrant workers facing domestic violence, sexual abuse, misbehave, police beating, and many more. Women during migration delivered on-road or in a police van without any medical aid as hospitals denied entry to them in the fear of corona and also these poor migrants don't have money, it shows the atrocities of human to human itself. Economic reasons are one such reason that these women migrants are facing in this time of crisis by losing a child and their life too. There is an instance in Jean Rhys' novel *Good Morning, Midnight* where the protagonist Sasha reveals that she had a child, a boy for whom she needs money to rescue him from the torture "money for my son...and there he is lying with a ticket tied round his wrist because he died in a hospital." This feeling is deplorable and only women can understand the pain of losing a child. Not even that women are facing several physical problems and one such can be the month cycle problem without proper sanitation by which they are prone to deadly infections and along with that sexual abuse by men in the form of police beating and misbehave is another big issue that has been avoided. Police were even seen beating women migrant workers with sticks when they were struggling to get back to their hometowns. Many rape incidents have been occurred during this pandemic which shows that women

are still not safe in home and it question that where they are safe? It's a grave issue which needs not to be questioned because all go in vain. The brutal gang rapes like 'Hathras Case' is one such which is manipulated by the superior ones. Women migrants got severe wounds in feet by continuous walk, and lack of food and water make them physically and psychologically weak. A lot of the women migrant workers also faced the threat of xenophobia as many are treated like 'outsider' especially the racism and discrimination against North-Eastern Indian women migrants. They have been attacked with racial insult and targeted for supposedly spreading the virus. Moreover, female migrant workers are unable to get essential supplies such as menstrual hygiene products. Besides, many women daily wage laborers, as well as women in the agricultural field in the country, are already suffering as they have lost their jobs and daily pay. This shows that gender-based violence got increased in this time of crisis.

Among the feminisation of labor, there is marriage migration which is important to discuss in gender dynamics. One such reason for women migration is because of marriage where they migrate with their husbands and were recognised as the helper of her husband which proves that she is not having her own identity as a worker but rather as a helper. Marriage as an institution works as providing identity to women as stated in the novel *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) where Sasha says "I ought to have put nationality by marriage" what she ascertains, an identity of her marriage and even her citizenship is depended upon the role of marriage which works throughout as an institution. This shows the power of identity and where the economic assertion of women is missing, not in the poor society but this devastated state is maintained by high class society also because patriarchy dominates everywhere.

French critic, Michel Foucault in his book *Power and knowledge* (1980) quoted "It is quite true that in popular consciousness, and also in the present economic system, a certain margin of illegality is not seen as a serious problem, but rather as perfectly tolerable" this shows the atrocities being done on women migrants in the present scenario where we can question the measurement of illegality because there is no proper measurement to it and to what extent it can be tolerable. As we see in Indian Mythology that victory or defeat in the war was ultimately inscribed on the bodies of women. The lamentation of Gandhari in *Mahabharata* can be one such tolerability whose kin were all vanished in epic battles (Das 2007:52). Relations at

home become imbalanced and women have to face this, alcoholism is one such cause of domestic abuse and government opens that door to men in lockdown to save the national economy but it causes ruptures in women's life. The women frontline workers do not provide of proper PPT kit and aid which caught them to lose their life in recovering the health of patients. Women also lack in decision making in the matter of sexual intercourse and they are consuming contraception pills without any prescription which converted their psychological impact into depression. Is women worker's life worth to consider in this deep-rooted patriarchal atmosphere? Coronavirus has proved that they are still considered as 'second sex' in society, despite their collaboration and cooperation.

### **TREATMENT FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF COVID-19**

To survive in this pandemic, an assessment is needed like the women migrants should be provided with food, health, and care. The government should focus on urging social welfare systems in the country as this crisis is proving to be a poverty multiplier. Support structures in the form of relief work need to be formed and there should be helplines for counseling. At home, the sharing of household chores should be done to minimize the workload of women. Women migrants need to maintain economic status because somehow it will minimize the violence and discrimination against them. We also see that stereotypes are breaking down in this pandemic which helps in dismantling the structure of power, an example where a girl takes her elderly disabled father on a cycle to her native place. We need to work with health surveillance team epidemiologists, environmental health scientists, public health physicians, infectious disease physicians, general practitioners, nurses, allied health professions, health policy-makers, health planners, health geographers and many others, to reduce the risks associated with pandemics. Messaging about health and hygiene, particularly about hand-washing is one of the roles played by health promotion Apps, Advertisement and Awareness campaigns.

Strategies like social distancing, self-quarantine, shutdown of school activities, adoption of online learning, travel restrictions and guidance to limit travel on public transport and advice about self-assessment of symptoms associated with COVID-19 helped in controlling the spread of the virus. All these pragmatic measures that

reach most people in need and we as a responsible social being need to implement/follow it.

### **CHANGING LIFE STYLES**

WHO (World Health Organisation) have issued guidance on control and prevention from this novel Coronavirus by wearing mask, using sanitizer, hand hygiene, avoiding social contact and eating healthy foods as a part of daily life. Ayurvedic medicines also proved as a supporter in recovering from this acute respiratory disease and it also gave hope to 'New Normal' where people are returning back to their daily lifestyle and added some new stuffs like 'kadha' in their regime which helps in clearing the throat and also helps in making the metabolism strong. Ayurveda, the Hindu science of health, says that the health of a body is governed by good diet (*keriymana karma*) and we should avoid bad diet because "You are what you eat" which is an old Indian household saying. Yoga is a holistic science which avail physical, mental and spiritual being and today it embraces the social well-being too. Yogic approaches are used to manage respiratory problems, asthma, hypertension, acidity, depression, anxiety, etc. Yoga have become the part of 'New Normal' that has been proven to possibly cure ill people at no cost of medical bills as morning walk got hindered to follow social distancing in order to suppress human to human transmission. 'New Normal' is described as a new way of living lives in this COVID-19 period and going about our lives, work and interactions with other people for long time.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is perhaps clear that quarantine is not only sufficient to prevent this virus from spreading which is one of heightening concern globally. It causes Demand Inflation when inflation is asserted to arise when aggregate demand of commodities in an economy outpaces aggregate supply. It shows that as inflation is raising then the cost of domestic product rises and unemployment falls. Women Migrant Workers working in Small Scale Industry and 'lockdown' puts 'lock' on industry which resulted in the 'down' of their income. It affects their livelihood but lately it gave hope to some in the form of Production Inflation where prices rise due to increase in production costs, such as mask, sanitizer, disinfectant in Corona Pandemic duration and wages got increased. But still there are many who are devoid of this opportunity.



The COVID-19 has a profound effect on the education but digitally it has been accomplished well. Its great with children having mobile phones with good quality of internet but its worst with children not having such privilege. Now a world is shrunk to one phone and several social platforms like YouTube and 'AarogyaSetu App' help women workers in learning the art of making mask, sanitizer and hygiene safety. Still it's a difficulty for them first to have the android phones and second on the use as they are unaware. Different programmes can be initiated to help out the majority of them not to the women but to the men workers too. These challenges can be overcome, however, through investment of time and effort by staff providers with familiarity with these techniques. During this rapidly evolving crisis, a great deal of flexibility will be required from both learners (workers) and educators, and learning methods that are not well studied. In this way migration will somehow reduce their problem but not entirely I suppose.

This lockdown has not only revealed some of the stark realities about inequality and privilege in India, but it has also proven to be a rather grim representation of how vulnerable and minority groups in society are treated during times of crisis and national emergency, as migrants in India is. While the wealthy and affluent can socially distance and do their part in containing the virus, the poor migrants are crowding and are a quivering and restless sea of human suffering, helplessness, and fear during this Corona crisis.

The threat is very serious. The pandemic has its origins in our colonisation of nature and species destruction. It is linked to the climate breakdown already delivering devastating droughts and storms with worse to come. Agriculture got affected well this year too. The Indian Farmers Protest 2020 is an ongoing protest against the three farm acts which were passed in this crucial time of pandemic in September 2020 which says that it would leave farmers at the 'mercy of corporates' but the government denied that it will provide them to sell their produce to big buyers. The government is not bothering about the concern of farmers and the protest is still going on. Nature in itself is a healer and we got to learn it through the cleaning of river on its own but it's a destroyer too, the forest fires in Australia are an example. Corona affects humans only and not to flora and fauna. It follows that we must end the abuse of our environment and lives in liberty within our now plentiful means.

It seems odd to compare a microorganism to the largest mammal, but the pandemic has swallowed neoliberal globalisation and all of us with it. We are inside the whale. Not in the sense that George Orwell uses, of being in a womb-like chamber away from it all, but in Jonah's "belly of hell."

Coronavirus should serve to change the neoliberal rationale, to rescue the social contract between the welfare state and the market economy, and to plan to prevent the following crises. To do so we have to link our different immediate issues to a simple global perspective that makes it clear our humanity has priority. The gift of the coronavirus: it makes it clear that the future of humanity is a matter of our choice. The disease is a sign of life and literature makes our life natural and free, enabling us to purify our minds. "This too shall pass" things are bad but it will not be always.

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# Changes and Challenges in Managing Higher Education System in India: Covid-19 Pandemic and National Education Policy-2020

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## ABSTRACT

India is one of the oldest and biggest education systems in the world and now it is one of the largest countries in the world in terms of churning out graduates as job seekers in the global market while striding towards a complete overhauling in the form of National Education Policy 2020 keeping in view of Industry 4.0, Management 4.0 and now Education 4.0 as a result of rapid changing global scenario. The COVID-19 pandemic between Feb 2020 and Aug 2021 followed by many locked downs and two serious and deadly waves also posed a lot of concerns and challenges for the present Indian education system forcing it to shut down for a while and later on to shift to complete online mode. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 which was promulgated on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020 has proposed many reforms at all levels of education system from pre-school to highest level of education which includes increase focus on early childhood care, reform the current exam and teaching system, more stress on teacher training and research culture and restructure the education regulatory framework. In this present paper a systematic study of the impact and repercussions of COVID 19 pandemic on Higher Education System of India has been carried out in the wake of implementing the reforms and recommendations by the National Education Policy 2020.

Keywords: COVID 19 Pandemic, Education 4.0, Industry 4.0, Management 4.0, National Education Policy 2020.

## INTRODUCTION

Since there are three major focal areas of study in this present paper which includes our present higher education scenario, the impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Higher Education in India and challenges in

the implementation of recommendations and reforms of National Education Policy 2020 in this present highly volatile situation, at first, it is important to understand the present higher education system in India.

India is a big country with full of cultural, economic, social and educational diversities and varied enormities. The higher education system in India is the third largest in the world, next to China and the United States. It is primarily managed by state-run public education system, which is controlled by the government at three levels, Central, state and local, but this scenario is changing rapidly as corporate culture has seeped into higher education sector and private players are now playing a major role in this gigantesque system. The present situation of higher education system in India is complex and challenging. With the increase in population, there has been surge in the number of students seeking admission in the universities and colleges for higher education.

### **SOME STATISTICAL FACTS**

As per statistical analysis in 2020, the gargantuan Indian education system has total enrolment estimated to be 38.5 million with 19.6 million boys and 18.9 million female students consists of 1043 Universities, 42343 Colleges and 11779 Stand Alone Institutions listed on AISHE web portal and 307 Universities are affiliating i.e. having Colleges which includes 54 central universities, 416 state universities, 125 deemed universities, 361 private universities and 159 Institutes of National Importance which include AIIMS, IIMs, IITs, IISERs, IITs and NITs among others. The number of universities has increased by 30.5% during the period of 2015-16 to 2019-20 and the number of college has also increased by about 8.4% in the same period. The enrolment in Higher Education stands at 3.85 crores in 2019-20 as compared to 3.74 crores in 2018-19, registering a growth of 11.36 lakh (3.04%).

According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20 report the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education in India is 27.1 in 2019-20, which has seen a rise from 26.3% in 2018-19 and 24.3% in 2014-2015. There has been a significant shift in the choice of the discipline of study, as in the last five years engineering and technology registered a negative growth of -13.4% while medical science and management courses enrolment has been up by 51.1% in the same period. Management of such a colossal system is indeed a

huge challenge in the wake of ever changing and challenging global scenario in the form of Industry 4.0, Management 4.0 and now Education 4.0.

The Economic Survey 2020-21 reported that spending on education as a percentage of GDP stagnated at 2.8% during 2014-2019 and increased to 3-3.5% in the 2019-21 period. The National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP) recommends of increasing public investment on education to 6% of GDP. USA is spending 5.4% of its GDP in the education sector, whereas Brazil is spending 5.7% of its GDP. In 2019-20, India spent Rs 6.43 lakh crore (\$88 billion) of public funds on education. On the other hand, The Ease of Doing Business Report (2019) by the World Bank ranks India at 63, up from 142 in 2014 and The Global Competitive Report (2021) by the World Economic Forum ranks India at 43 which is quite encouraging keeping in view the present pandemic scenario.

Major policy initiatives in Indian education system have been taken in 1968, 1986, 1992 and now 2020 since Independence in the form of Educational Policies. Education policies and plans were determined by each of India's constitutional states Till 1976. The 42nd amendment to the Constitution in 1976 made education a 'concurrent subject' and since then the central and state governments shared formal responsibility for funding and administration of education. In a country like ours, now with 28 states and eight union territories, the challenge of variations by states in the policies, plans, programs and initiatives at all levels of education is quite evident. It will be necessary to overcome this humongous challenge in order to continue to reap a demographic dividend from India's comparatively young population. Now the promulgation of NEP 2020 with the onslaught of COVID-19 Pandemic induced lockdowns, the Indian Higher Education system is at the crossroads to face this challenging times.

## **COVID-19 PANDEMIC INDUCED CHALLENGES AND CHANGES**

The outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 when the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared it a pandemic, has forced many countries to enforce lockdowns that brought everything to a standstill including the teaching and learning process. The educational sector is the biggest sector that has been adversely affected by this pandemic. This pandemic has made the world to observe social distancing in

public spaces. It has claimed millions of lives across the world with total cases registered are 21.9 crore and deaths 45.5 lakh and so far 3.4 crore cases and 4.51 lakh deaths have been registered in India between Mar 2020 to 10 Oct 2021. More than 10 million jobs were affected. According to the UNESCO report more than 90% of total student population in the world was affected due to the pandemic during the initial phase of its outbreak. The teaching learning and evaluation methodologies have been completely altered by this pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic created a lot of challenges in the Indian education system. At such a time, understanding these challenges is key to solving them for better crisis management in education in general and in higher education in particular. The Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on higher education is quite enormous with far reaching changes.

### **Disrupted Education System turns Digitised**

Since the onset of coronavirus, students are staying at home and continuing their educational life from a single place. In India, about 32 crore learners stopped going to schools/colleges and all educational activities are at a halt. Apart from routine advisories in the form of notifications for standard operating procedures, protocols or guidelines issued from time to time at the apex level by the University Grants Commission (UGC), and at the State level by the respective Education Departments, nothing concrete has been done on the ground. The digitalisation of education for remote learning became a necessity in order to provide seamless education. Covid-19 has accelerated adoption of digital technologies to deliver education. It encouraged all teachers and students to become more technology savvy. The institutions have also started conducting orientation programs, inductions and counselling classes with the help of virtual conferencing tools like Google Meet, Skype, Zoom, YouTube live, and Facebook live, etc. to provide support services to the students. The teachers and students improved the use of electronic media for sharing information through WhatsApp, Google Drive, Telegram, Twitter etc.

### **Research and Professional Development takes a new turn**

The pandemic has given teachers much time to improve their theoretical research work, online knowledge updating and getting acquainted with new technological tools. Webinars became a normal

method for sharing expertise among students and teachers around the globe facing similar issues.

### **New Mode of Examination and Assessment**

As most of the external examinations have been postponed and almost all the internal assessments have been cancelled, many institutions have been managing the internal assessments through online mode using different digital tools but the postponement of the external assessments has a direct impact on the educational and occupational future. Many students who had appeared in final examinations suffered a loss of an academic year as their college exams were cancelled which also seriously affected their college admission process in India and abroad. As rightly put by Mv Prasad Kantipudi “The Covid-19 pandemic motivates the education institutions and stakeholders for remote learning as well as it makes a new challenge in global economies.”

### **Reduced Employment Opportunities Paves ways for Skill-Based Vocational Training**

Many entrance tests and job recruitments got cancelled which created a negative impact in the life of students of higher education and those who have been preparing for years. In India, there are no recruitments in Government sector and fresh graduates are under pressure of fearing withdrawal of job offers from corporate sectors because of the pandemic situation. With this increase in unemployment, many students have withdrawn from higher education and begun their professional journey too early. Many of them have quit studying because of financial constraints whereas many teachers are suffering from financial plight.

### **Need for Robust Connectivity across the Country**

For countries like India, this is a good opportunity to strengthen internet connectivity across rural India. Every village and town in India should be digitally connected for better interaction between the students and teachers. D. Chandrashekhar has rightly put: “Institutes like IITs and IISc have a sort of infrastructure to connect students but the experience shows that not all students have good interaction due to various reasons.” Thus, pandemic has both positive and negative sides in the education sector, it has impacted students and teachers heavily.

## **THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: A SOLUTION AND SOLACE FOR RECOVERY**

In the face of such challenges the need for drastic changes in higher education was unavoidable. More flexibility, more innovativeness, more global exposure but more locally connected, more research based, more techno-savvy, more student centric, socially responsible, more collaborative, system of education was the need of the hour. Keeping in view to create a robust educational eco system in India for gearing up the progressive Gen-Next to face global as well as local challenges efficiently and effectively, a comprehensive education policy has been envisaged by systematising and coordinating various educational bodies to work in tandem. The National Education Policy 2020 is the timely solution for these ailments as being a very forward looking, innovative, democratic and student centric policy.

NEP 2020, approved by the Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020 and recently celebrated the first anniversary by assessing its implementation process, aims to provide infrastructure support, innovative education centres to bring back dropouts into the mainstream, besides tracking students and their learning levels, facilitating multiple pathways to learning involving both formal and non-formal education modes and association of counsellors or well-trained faculty. It also seeks to set up a National Education Commission, increase public investment in education, strengthen the use of technology and increase focus on vocational and adult education, among others. The Committee noted that the current education system solely focuses on rote learning of facts and procedures. Hence, it recommends that the curriculum load in each subject should be reduced to its essential core content. This would make space for holistic, discussion and analysis-based learning. We need a new approach like the “NEW NORMAL” in this pandemic situation.

Bachelor’s programmes will be multidisciplinary in nature and there will be no rigid separation between arts and sciences. Indian arts, languages and culture will be promoted at all levels. By 2035, all higher education institutions like IITs will become multidisciplinary. There will be greater inclusion of arts and humanities subjects for science students and vice-versa. Selected universities from among the top 100 universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India. The system of affiliated colleges will be phased out in 15 years and



colleges will be given greater autonomy and power to grant degrees with multiple entry and exit facility to students. The deemed university status will also end. It also suggests to continue smooth online learning system in India, and low-cost fibre-optic internet facility may be provided to all citizens. Further, by providing and awareness and training on online teaching learning sources for both students and faculty may provide possible situations to create a world class education system even in the post COVID-19 situation.

Higher educational institutes need to improve quality, reputation and establish credibility through student exchange, faculty exchange programs, and other collaborations with high-quality national and international higher educational institutes. NEP 2020 proposes to promote collaboration between Indian higher education institutes and top International institutes and also generate linkages between national research laboratories and research centres of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research. NEP also focuses on the graduate students by providing them job-oriented courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.

In the field of higher education in India, there was the time when population of the country was much lesser and higher education was accessible to all and everyone. High Cut-off rate: Students find a staggeringly high cut-off percentage for admission such as 80%, 85% even 90% in some subjects in prestigious universities and colleges. This again is a grim scenario, causing distress disappointment even leading to deep depression among the admission seekers. The Competency Based Credit System (CBCS) in place of Choice Based Credit System with CGPA grading system, Continuous Evaluation System (CES) and co-curricular and extra-curricular subjects have been included in as curricular subjects in the 360 degree mark sheet, have come up as a robust solution to this mad rush for achieving higher percentage in exam.

Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) adopted in 2015 by India for educational development seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 which is the thrust area of NEP 2020. The policy aims at complete transformation of India’s education system by 2035. And as D Chandrashekhar has put it in TOI, “It should be flexible, more innovative, more international but more

locally connected and socially responsible, more collaborative, and less risk-averse.”

## CONCLUSION

In this paper the present situation of India in higher education sector in view of COVID-19 pandemic has been presented with an understanding to identify the challenges like demand-supply gap, lack of quality research, problem of infrastructure and basic facilities, shortage of faculty etc. in the higher education system and how the implementation framework by NEP 2020 manages to focus on improving quality of state institutions, to revamp financial aid programs, to interlink expansion, equity and excellence. To improve the higher education system we need to improve teaching pedagogy, build synergies between research and teaching, and facilitate alliance of higher institutions among themselves, research centres and industries. This is necessary not only to take care of economic growth, but it is also essential for social cohesion and to empower the country's youth. In this view the academic institutions may play a vital role in imparting contemporary vibrant knowledge and honing the skills of students. These reforms in the higher education system are highly required to bridge the gap between the employers' expectations from the graduates and the skills possessed by them. Higher education in India needs to be more international, more flexible, more innovative, and open for more collaboration.

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## CHAPTER 20

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# Acceptance of Google Meet and Google Forms for Online Teaching-Learning and Evaluation during Covid-19 Pandemic

*Vikas Chandra*

### ABSTRACT

The shutdown of schools and higher education institutes due to COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the teaching-learning and examination-evaluation from regular classroom mode to online mode. In Indian settings, the technology based e-learning was challenging for teachers as well as students of the most of the educational institutes. Google applications such as Google Meet and Google Forms are being used as the most common tools by Indians for online teaching-learning and examination-evaluation respectively. In order to understand the opinion of students towards Google Meet and Google Forms, an online survey was conducted. Considering the pandemic scenario in mind, most of the respondents were found to be happy with Google Meet and Google Forms as compared to regular classroom based settings and other technology based platforms. They acknowledged the importance of implementing such tools for teaching-learning as well as examination-evaluation. Overall, this survey shows that Google Meet and Google Forms are gaining wide acceptance in higher education institutes for smooth running of academic courses.

*Keywords:* Google Meet, Google Forms, teaching-learning, examination-evaluation, COVID-19, pandemic

### INTRODUCTION

A deadly virus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which was originated in Wuhan, China is responsible for extremely contagious disease that is called COVID-19. This viral disease has affected all the continents of the planet earth and has taken on pandemic proportions (Mishra et al., 2020;

Remuzzi & Remuzzi, 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 has altered the operating conditions throughout the world within a month. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic disease were unpredictable as well as uncontrollable for almost all sectors/industries of the globe. In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 disease the governments of almost all the countries of the world have ordered to close the schools and higher education institutes. Around 120 countries had stopped regular classroom based face-to-face teaching-learning. Throughout the world, this pandemic had affected education of approximately a billion students. In order to continue teaching-learning, most of the school and higher education institutes are operating through e-learning (Azzi-Huck & Shmis, 2020; Shahzad et al., 2020). Maintaining social distancing is of paramount importance for controlling the spread of coronavirus infection. This fact has been the reason behind shutting down of school, colleges and universities for an indefinite period (Martinez, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020).

As regular classroom based education is not possible in this pandemic period, it is the need of the hour to gravely, rethink, revamp and redesign our teaching-learning and examination-evaluation system. In this unprecedented condition, online teaching is the only option that has brought organisations as well as individuals in an unfreeze state (Martinez, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020).

The term “e-learning” is covered under the larger term known as “technology-based learning” that is done using educational websites and portals, video-conferencing platforms (such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom, Microsoft Team, Cisco Webex, Blackboard etc.), YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, other mobile and computer apps, websites and tools providing facility of blended learning. The use of technology based learning has not only benefited students but it has also become the means to enhance the skills of academicians, professionals and industry people (Adams et al., 2018; Chopra et al., 2019; Shahzad et al., 2020). Google applications such as Google Meet, Google Forms and Google Classroom are boon of technology that has facilitated teachers and students for teaching-learning and examination-evaluation (Alim et al., 2019; Fauzan & Arifin, 2019; Ocampo et al., 2017).

Realisation of the need of technology based learning has caused increased demand of computer and IT based modern and excellent

infrastructures in educational institutes (Alvino et al., 2020; Di Vaio et al., 2020; Shahzad et al., 2020).

But the shift from regular classroom based teaching-learning and examination-evaluation to online technology based learning and evaluation has raised many questions on the quality of education and their acceptance among students and teachers (Sahu, 2020; Shahzad et al., 2020). In order to understand the perception of students towards online teaching-learning through Google Meet and online examination-evaluation through Google Forms the author has conducted an online survey. The main objective of this survey was to analyse the level of acceptance of the Google applications such as Google Meet and Google Forms among university students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

An online survey was conducted using Google Forms. The link of the survey was sent through WhatsApp to students of Department of Biotechnology, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, India. The students belonged to B.Sc. 1<sup>st</sup> year, B.Sc. 2<sup>nd</sup> year, B.Sc. 3<sup>rd</sup> year, M.Sc. 1<sup>st</sup> year, M.Sc. 2<sup>nd</sup> year and the individuals who just finished their M.Sc. (batch2018-2020). 12 relevant questions were asked in this survey in order to understand whether there is an acceptance or not of Google Meet and Google Forms for online teaching-learning and evaluation during COVID-19 pandemic. In questions 1, 2 and 3 the students had been given choices of “yes” or “no”. Questions 4, 5, 8, 10, 11 and 12 were 5-point scale based questions. The students had choices of showing agreement or strong agreement or disagreement or strong disagreement or remaining neutral for the statements given in these questions. Questions 6, 7 and 9 were such that students had to choose one specific answer. The responses of the questions 1, 2, 3 and 7 are represented diagrammatically in pie-charts (figure 1, 2, 3 and 7). The responses of the questions 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 are represented diagrammatically in bar-charts (figure 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12). Bar and pie charts were prepared using online software meta-chart (<https://www.meta-chart.com>).

## **RESULTS**

Till the time of writing this manuscript total 106 students filled and submitted the online survey. The response of each question is described in following section.

### **Response to the question “Are you aware about Google Meet and Google Forms?”**

97.2% of the students responded that they were aware about Google Meet and Google Forms while only 2.8% of the students responded that they were not aware about Google Meet and Google Forms (figure 1).

### **Response to the question “Do you have experience of attending classes through Google Meet?”**

95.3% of the students responded that they had experience of attending classes through Google Meet while only 4.7% of the students responded that they didn't have experience of attending classes through Google Meet (figure 2).

### **Response to the question “Do you have experience of giving examination through Google Forms?”**

86.8% of the students responded that they had experience of giving examination through Google Forms while only 13.2% of the students responded that they didn't have experience of giving examination through Google Forms (figure 3).

### **Response to the statement “Google Meet is an extremely valuable tool for teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic as regular classroom mode of teaching can increase the risk of Coronavirus infection”.**

28.3% of the students strongly agreed that Google Meet is an extremely valuable tool for teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic as regular classroom mode of teaching can increase the risk of Coronavirus infection. 24.5% of the students agreed on this statement. 24.5% of the students remained neutral on this statement. 8.5% of the students disagreed on this statement while 14.2% of the students strongly disagreed on this statement (figure 4).

### **Response to the statement “Google Forms is an extremely valuable tool for examination-evaluation in the time of COVID-19 pandemic as regular classroom mode of examination can increase the risk of Coronavirus infection”.**

26.4% of the students strongly agreed that Google Forms is an extremely valuable tool for examination-evaluation in the time of

COVID-19 pandemic as regular classroom mode of examination can increase the risk of Coronavirus infection. 18.9% of the students agreed on this statement. 27.4% of the students remained neutral on this statement. 11.3% of the students disagreed on this statement while 16% of the students strongly disagreed on this statement (figure 5).

**Response to the question “According to you, in the time of COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following mode of teaching-learning is best?”**

84.9% of the students responded that online teaching through Google Meet is the best mode of teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. 8.5% of the students responded that regular classroom teaching is the best mode of teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. 2.8% of the students responded that online teaching through Zoom application is the best mode of teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. 1.9% of the students responded that online teaching through Microsoft Team is the best mode of teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. None of the students considered Cisco Webex as the best mode of teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. The remaining 1.9% students wanted to opt for some other online platforms for teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic (figure 6).

**Response to the question “According to you, in the time of COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following mode of examination-evaluation is best?”**

45.3% of the students responded that online examination using Google Forms is the best mode of examination-evaluation in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. 44.3% of the students responded that online examination through e-mail (getting questions from examiner by e-mail, writing answers in blank paper, scanning the answer sheet, submitting scanned sheet through e-mail) is the best mode of examination-evaluation in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. 7.5% of the students responded that regular examination in examination hall is the best mode of examination-evaluation in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. The remaining 2.8% students wanted oral examination through video calling in the time of COVID-19 pandemic (figure 7).



**Response to the statement “Teachers have accepted the challenge of online teaching and evaluation by learning and implementing various tools such as Google Meet, Google Forms, and Google Classroom etc.”**

38.7% of the students strongly agreed that teachers have accepted the challenge of online teaching and evaluation by learning and implementing various tools such as Google Meet, Google Forms, and Google Classroom etc. 20.8% of the students agreed on this statement. 25.5% of the students remained neutral on this statement. 6.6% of the students disagreed on this statement while 8.5% of the students strongly disagreed on this statement (figure 8).

**Response to the question “Once universities/colleges/institutes will be open for students, which mode of learning must be implemented at that time?”**

32.1% of the students said that only regular classroom based teaching must be implemented once universities/colleges/institutes will be open for students. 18.9% of the students said that only online teaching using Google Meet etc must be implemented once universities/colleges/institutes will be open for students. While, 49.1% of the students were found to be in favour of implementation of blended learning (implementation of regular classroom based as well as online mode of teaching) once universities/colleges/institutes will be open for students (figure 9).

**Response to the statement “COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that we can work from home using online teaching-learning and evaluation platforms such as Google Meet, Google Forms etc.”**

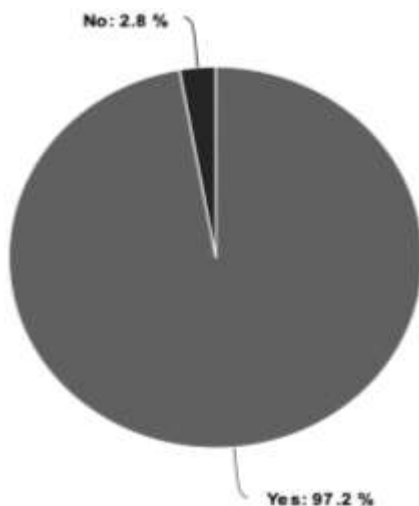
49.1% of the students strongly agreed that COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that we can work from home using online teaching-learning and evaluation platforms such as Google Meet, Google Forms etc. 19.8% of the students agreed on this statement. 15.1% of the students remained neutral on this statement. 9.4% of the students disagreed on this statement while 6.6% of the students strongly disagreed on this statement (figure 10).

**Response to the statement “Google meet, Google Forms and other online tools are gaining wide acceptance in education as well as other fields due to COVID-19 pandemic”.**

47.2% of the students strongly agreed that Google meet, Google Forms and other online tools are gaining wide acceptance in education as well as other fields due to COVID-19 pandemic. 20.8% of the students agreed on this statement. 11.3% of the students remained neutral on this statement. 13.2% of the students disagreed on this statement while 7.5% of the students strongly disagreed on this statement (figure 11).

**Response to the statement “Google applications such as Google Meet, Google Forms and Google Classroom are user friendly, relatively safer and are available free of cost. This is the reason behind their wide acceptance, especially in education sector”.**

49.1% of the students strongly agreed that Google applications such as Google Meet, Google Forms and Google Classroom are gaining wide acceptance, especially in education sector, as they are user friendly, relatively safer and are available free of cost. 18.9% of the students agreed on this statement. 14.2% of the students remained neutral on this statement. 13.2% of the students disagreed on this statement while 4.7% of the students strongly disagreed on this statement (figure 12).



**Figure 1: Response to the question  
“Are you aware about Google Meet and Google Forms?”**

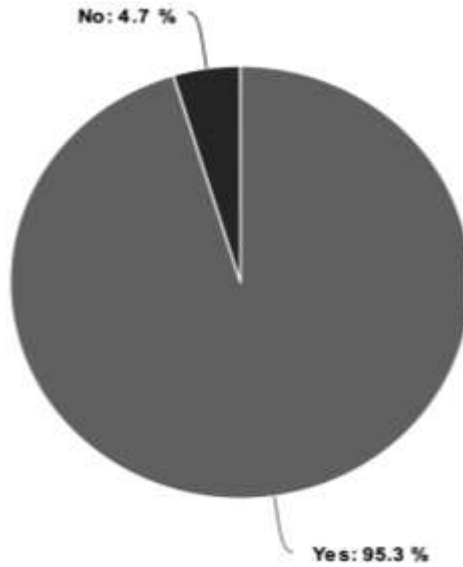


Figure 2: Response to the question  
"Do you have experience of attending classes through Google Meet?"

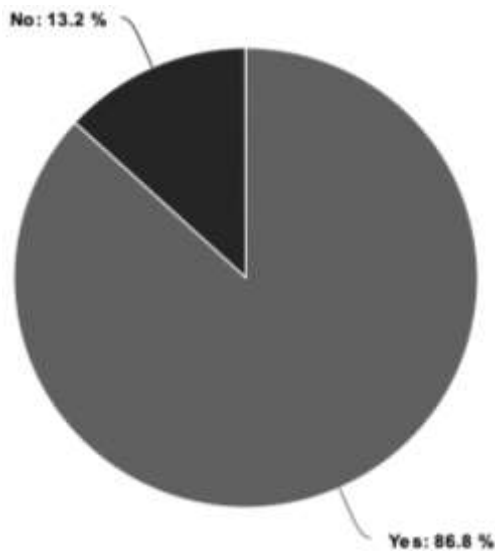


Figure 3: Response to the question  
"Do you have experience of giving examination through Google Forms?"

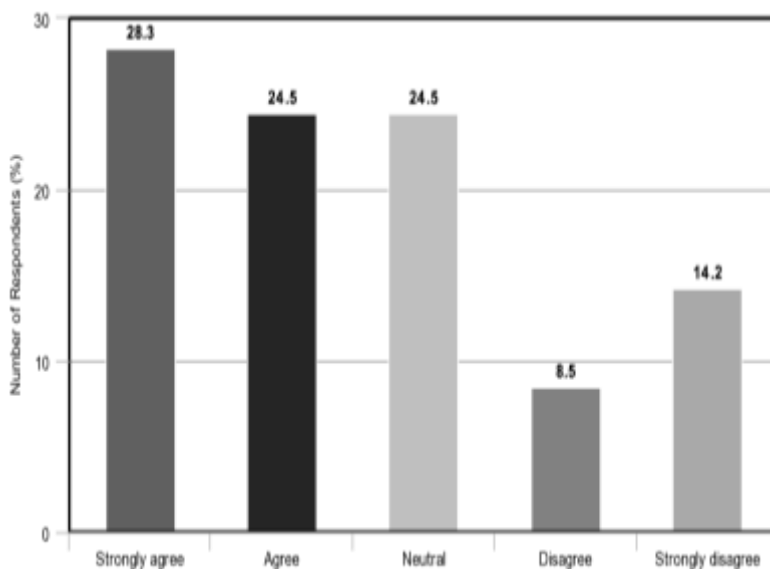


Figure 4: Response to the statement “Google Meet is an extremely valuable tool for teaching-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic as regular classroom mode of teaching can increase the risk of Coronavirus infection”.

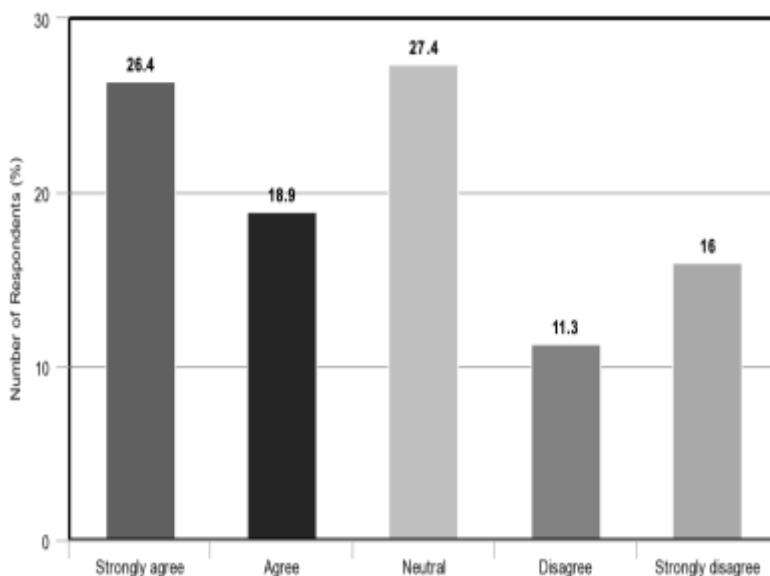


Figure 5: Response to the statement “Google Forms is an extremely valuable tool for examination-evaluation in the time of COVID-19 pandemic as regular classroom mode of examination can increase the risk of Coronavirus infection”.

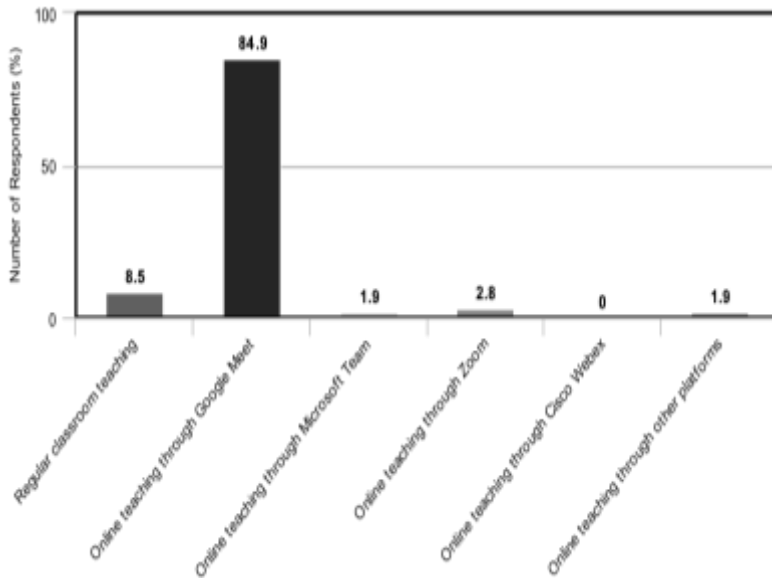


Figure 6: Response to the question “According to you, in the time of COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following mode of teaching-learning is best?”

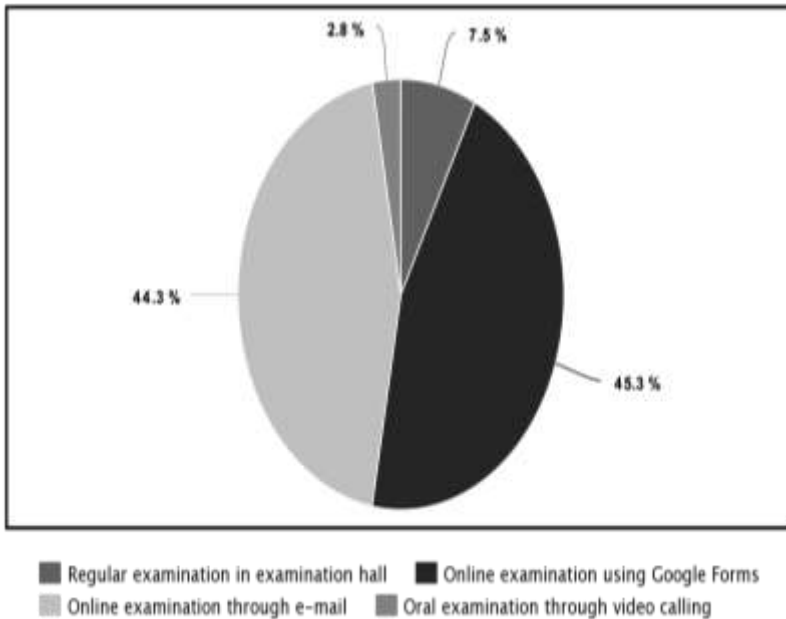


Figure 7: Response to the question “According to you, in the time of COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following mode of examination-evaluation is best?”

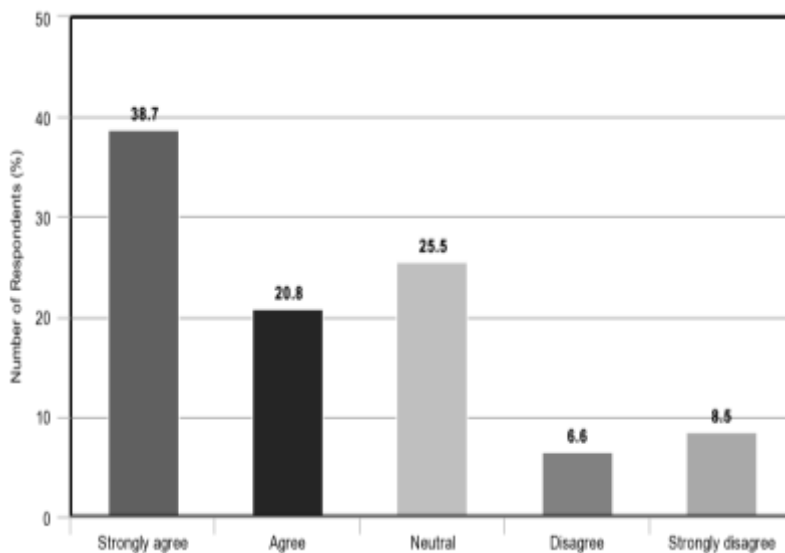


Figure 8: Response to the statement “Teachers have accepted the challenge of online teaching and evaluation by learning and implementing various tools such as Google Meet, Google Forms, and Google Classroom etc.”

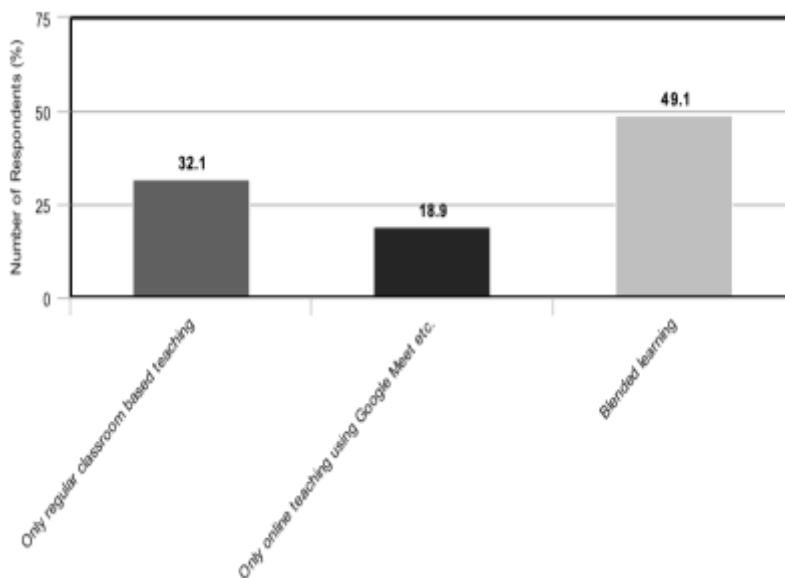


Figure 9: Response to the question “Once universities/colleges/institutes will be open for students, which mode of learning must be implemented at that time?”

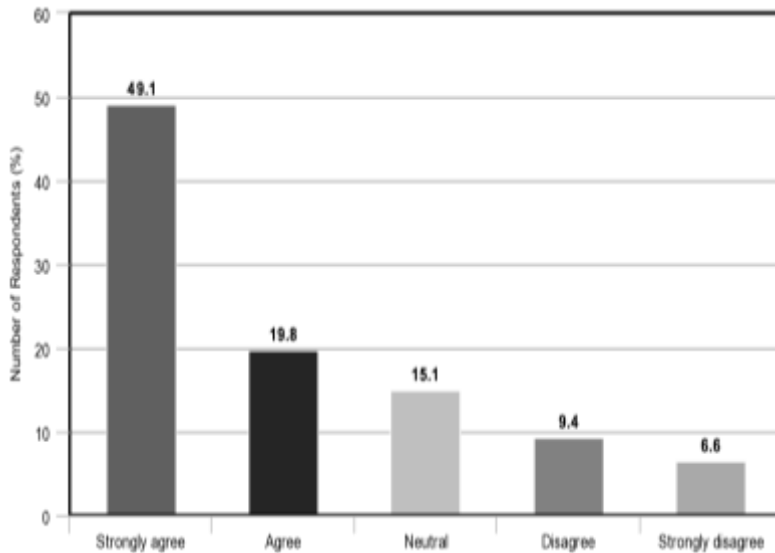


Figure 10: Response to the statement “COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that we can work from home using online teaching-learning and evaluation platforms such as Google Meet, Google Forms etc.”

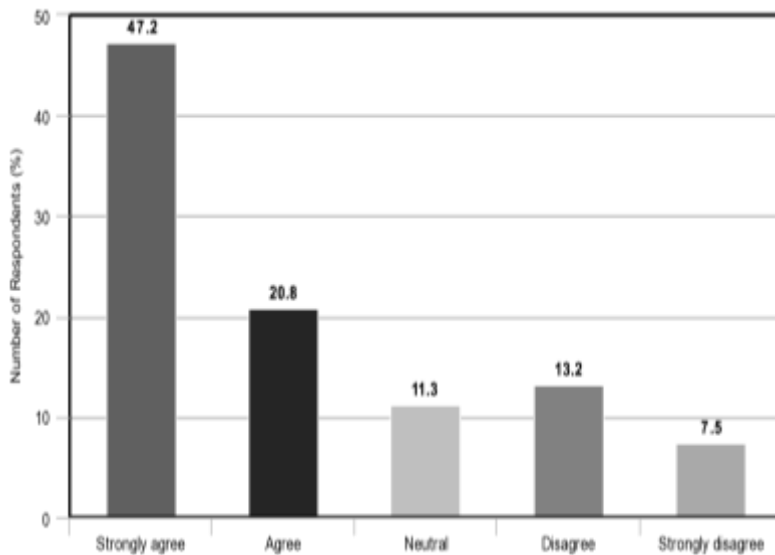
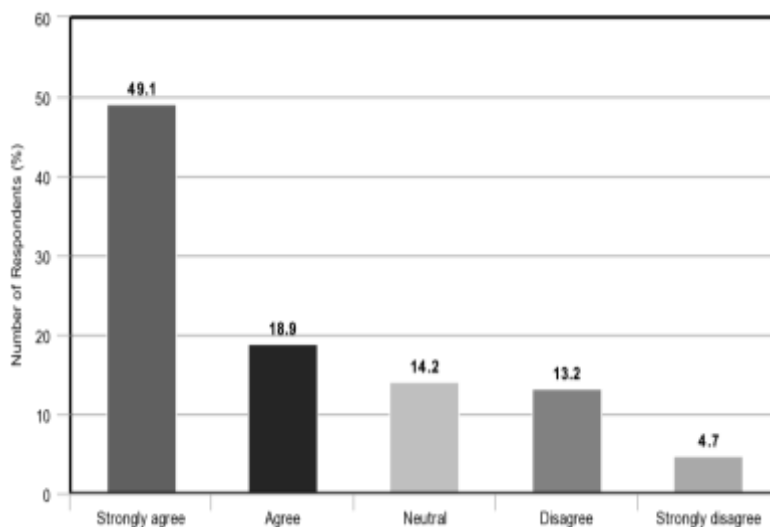


Figure 11: Response to the statement “Google meet, Google Forms and other online tools are gaining wide acceptance in education as well as other fields due to COVID-19 pandemic”.



**Figure 12: Response to the statement “Google applications such as Google Meet, Google Forms and Google Classroom are user friendly, relatively safer and are available free of cost. This is the reason behind their wide acceptance, especially in education sector”.**

## DISCUSSION

Until the COVID-19 outbreak, the conventional face-to-face teacher-student interaction had been considered the best pedagogical approach in formal education with the general perception that this approach may be supplemented but could not be replaced by some other pedagogical approaches such as e-learning, distance education and correspondence courses that are being used in non-formal education. But, the after-effects of COVID-19 pandemic have caused a drastic and dramatic shift in pedagogical approaches in formal education from conventional classroom based education to modern approach in the form of online education. In India, central and state governments had directed educational institutes to implement the online teaching-learning approaches in order to prevent compromise in academic courses in the pandemic period. Initially there was a mixed opinion among teachers and students on this decision. While some welcomed this decision with open arms other accepted it half-heartedly. Despite the initial differences of opinion in adapting the non-conventional pedagogical methods, the transition from conventional classroom based approach to online approach in



education was found to be smooth. The reason behind this smooth transitioning was the fact that people (students and teachers) were already comfortable with using mobile, computers and were familiar with one or more of the several social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram etc. This helped teachers and students in adapting online meeting platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Cisco WebEx, etc. and other tools such as Google Classroom, Google Forms, Microsoft Team for education purpose. It indicates that there is no need to get into panic to implement and adapt technology based teaching (Mishra et al., 2020).

Teachers of Indian schools, colleges, and universities willingly or unwillingly accepted the challenge of adapting technology based pedagogical approaches. The task was not easy, especially for older teachers who were used to teach in classroom using blackboard, chalk and duster with face-to-face interaction with students. But sooner or later, every teacher realised that being an academician one cannot ignore the modern approaches of teaching-learning and examination-evaluation. Every teacher made his/her own action plan. The way the online teaching-learning and examination-evaluation was implemented differed from one teacher to another. In any case, the main advantage of shift to online education during the pandemic is that it has provided feeling of psychological safety (Mishra et al., 2020) to students that were very much concerned about continuation and completion of their degree courses due to shutdown of higher education institutes for indefinite time. The other advantage of online teaching is that teachers do not have to spent times in using blackboard/whiteboard, chalk/marker, duster and filling attendance sheet manually in each class. It means that they may utilise this time in explaining difficult to understand concepts more elaborately. Moreover, the education, especially examination has become paperless due to implementation of specific online applications such as Google Classroom (Fauzan & Arifin, 2019) and Google Forms that serve the purpose (examination-evaluation). Using such applications it is also possible to release the grade of students immediately after completion of exam.

The availability of strong internet is a prerequisite in order to conduct online classes successfully. This is especially important for teachers because if a teacher does not have good internet connectivity, none of the students will be able to listen to the lecture clearly. The problem of weak internet can partially be solved by

instructing the students to keep their audio and video in off mode until and unless required. But, it is like teaching to a blank wall where teachers cannot read the face and mind of the students. In this case it will be very difficult for a teacher to design new strategy of teaching as per the need of the class. Moreover, it is also very difficult to know the actual participation of students in class (Mishra et al., 2020) as some students may just join the online class and disappear physically and mentally.

Although, one cannot neglect the importance of online education in the current COVID-19 crisis but this approach cannot replace the conventional mode of education in long run. The quality education that is based on laboratory-work and hands-on-experience, library visit, peer-tutoring, remedial classes, research and infrastructure etc. cannot be delivered using online education (Mishra et al., 2020). Thus, the shift from conventional to online mode of teaching-learning and examination-evaluation has raised many questions on quality and acceptance of education. To address this issue, the current study was conducted using online survey to understand the acceptance level of students towards online teaching-learning and examination-evaluation through most common applications of Google such as Google Meet and Google Forms. In this study, a very wide acceptance was observed among students towards such applications. Students also acknowledged that their teachers have adapted themselves as per the need of the hour in the time of COVID-19 crisis by implementing Google Meet, Google Forms and other online tools for conducting classes and organising examinations. Majority of students were found to be in favour of implementation of blended learning once higher education institutes are open for students. It is obvious because conventional and technology based education have their own merits and demerits. As everybody is now familiar with offline as well as online mode of education, it will be a good strategy to combine both kind of modes (blended learning or hybrid mode). By maintaining the equilibrium between conventional and technology based approaches we may witness the significant improvement in quality of education in long run.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the present study the online survey showed that majority of students were found to be aware of Google Meet and Google Forms.

Majority of students had experience of attending classes through Google Meet and giving examination through Google Forms. Majority of students found Google Meet and Google Forms extremely valuable for teaching-learning and examination-evaluation respectively considering the fact that regular classroom mode of teaching and examination can increase the risk of coronavirus infection. Majority of students considered online teaching through Google Meet and online examination using Google Forms as the best modes of teaching-learning and examination-evaluation respectively in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. Majority of students acknowledged that their teachers have accepted the challenge of online teaching and evaluation by learning and implementing various tools such as Google Meet, Google Forms and Google Classroom etc. Majority of students wanted that blended learning (regular classroom based teaching along with online mode of teaching) must be implemented once universities/colleges/institutes open for students. Majority of students accepted that COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that we can work from home using online teaching-learning and examination-evaluation platforms such as Google Meet, Google Forms etc. Majority of students agreed that Google Meet, Google Forms and other online tools are gaining wide acceptance in education as well as other fields due to COVID-19 pandemic. Majority of students agreed that Google applications such as Google Meet, Google Forms and Google Classroom are gaining wide acceptance especially in education sector due to the fact that these applications are user friendly, relatively safer and are available free of cost.

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## CHAPTER 21

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# Teachers during Pandemic Situation in Nagaland: Experiences, and Challenges

*Sunepinla Aier*

### ABSTRACT

When the pandemic occurred in 2020, every sector contributing to the progress of the country, including the educational sector, came to a halt. As such, educational institutions resorted to remote teaching-learning whereby the process of teaching and learning shifted from the classrooms to the confines of homes. The 'online classes' came as a savior for many as they allowed students and teachers to engage themselves in active communication. For this study, the investigator administered open-ended questionnaires to a purposively selected sample of 26 teachers both males and females teaching at primary, middle, secondary, higher secondary, and college levels. This study explored the experiences and challenges faced by the teachers in Nagaland. Considering the unplanned and sudden transition in the mode of teaching, it came as no surprise that there were many ups and downs faced by the teachers as well as the students. One significant finding was that poor network connectivity issue was the major barrier to conducting the online classes smoothly. In general, the overall journey was an eye-opener and a challenging experience whereby both teachers and students explored the variety of online platforms that can be used for educational purposes which otherwise would not have been learned about had it not been for the transition in the mode of teaching-learning.

*Keywords:* Teachers, Pandemic Situation, Remote Teaching-Learning, Online Platforms, Face to Face Teaching.

### INTRODUCTION

Teachers are one of the most significant elements contributing to the progress of a country. As such the quality of teachers influences the quality of education to a great extent. Education is never static. It progresses, develops, and changes intending to keep up with the

needs/demands of time. Likewise, any individual who takes up the profession of teaching is expected to adapt to the changes and advance their knowledge accordingly. 2020 was a difficult year for people from every walk of life. With the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic throughout the world, every single sector contributing to the progress of the country came to a halt incurring losses and damages. This does not go without saying that the educational sector too had its fair share of struggles and losses. Educational institutions were shut down overnight. The whole teaching-learning process shifted from classrooms to the confines of homes. The stakeholders of education were faced with a situation they were not prepared for. Eventually, however, people were able to cope and learn from different resources to adapt to the sudden changes demanded by the situation (considering the accessibility and affordability).

Faced with unusual school closures, educational institutions have designed remote learning programs that allow students and instructors to engage in active communication and collaboration in real-time and at the same time allow students to learn through a variety of instructional videos, online discussions, and employ a variety of technologies (print materials, radio, television, the Internet, and/or mobile) (Wilichowski & Cobo). It is no surprise that many teachers are finding it difficult to acclimate to this new reality, given these new delivery mechanisms (Wilichowski & Cobo). When the worldwide pandemic hit in 2020, teachers in Nagaland, just like many others, were faced with a situation they were not prepared for. Online class was a solution and savior for many, but there were numerous cases where teachers had to consider the plight of the less privileged students. Nagaland is a state which has access to technology but has various shortcomings such as bad network coverage, lack of access to smartphones (online class-friendly phones) because of the financial situation of the parents, lack of proper knowledge of technology, etc.

### KEY TERMS USED

- *Teachers* – According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 10th edition, a teacher is 'a person whose job is teaching, especially in a school.' *Cambridge dictionary* also defines a teacher as, 'Someone whose job is to teach in a school or college.' Concerning this study, the mentioned teachers refer to those teaching in Nagaland. Teachers teaching at primary, middle, secondary, higher secondary, and college levels of

both rural and urban areas shared their experiences which contributed to the successful completion of this study.

- *Pandemic Situation* – On the declaration of the Corona Virus Disease-19 (COVID-19) as a world pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 11 March 2020, an order was issued by the Government of Nagaland to close down all educational institutions in Nagaland starting from March 17th 2020. Respectively, the ‘Pandemic situation’ in this study refers to the period when a lockdown order was issued, and all educational institutions had to be shut down.
- *Remote Teaching-Learning* – The term ‘Remote’ teaching-learning refers to when teachers and students are separated by distance and time with technologies. Regarding this study, remote teaching-learning refers to the shift from regular classroom teaching-learning to an online mode of teaching-learning in Nagaland during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *Online Platforms* – A digital service that supports interactions between two or more users that connect through the service over the Internet is referred to as an online platform (OECD 20). With regard to this study, the online platforms which served as the mediators for the teacher and the students include WhatsApp, Telegram, Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Teachmint, MyClass Attendance, and Xodo, etc.
- *Face-to-face Teaching* – Face-to-face teaching is an instructional method in which a teacher or an instructor delivers or teaches the content materials to the students or the learners in person. This allows both parties to engage and interact in real-time. It is the most common and traditional method of teaching.

## OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of this paper:

- To explore the experiences of the teachers during the pandemic in Nagaland.
- To explore and identify the challenges faced by teachers during the pandemic in Nagaland.

## **METHODOLOGY USED**

The investigator self-developed an open-ended questionnaire. Samples were purposively selected. The number of samples were 26 teachers irrespective of gender, experience, administration, location, and levels of education taught. The questionnaire was administered through online platforms like Google Forms and WhatsApp. Responses were submitted through the same.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **Dealing with the Transition of Teaching from Face to Face/Classroom to Remote Teaching**

Upon sharing their experiences on how they dealt with the transition in teaching mode when the pandemic hit the world, many teachers remarked that it was rather difficult and challenging to adapt to the new mode of teaching, i.e., remote teaching. Most of the teachers resorted to teaching through online platforms whereby all the necessary academic activities like teaching, assignments, tests, examinations, extracurricular programs, etc., were held online and there were some cases where teachers, instead of practicing the online teaching, distributed hardcopy materials to students (especially in the rural areas) because of reasons like inaccessibility to electronic gadgets and internet. Many teachers opined that they were not able to deliver the instructions to the students as successful as intended. As one teacher remarked, “Although many students adapted to it slowly, some students found ways to take advantage of the situation. Their attendance via online platforms was highly questionable.”

### **Means and Techniques Used by the Teachers to Reach Out to Students to Deliver Instructions**

Upon such a shift in the teaching-learning process, the policymakers of education came up with a ton of new policies and regulations for educational boards, educational institutions, teachers, students, and parents to follow. Like many other professionals who resorted to online platforms to complete the tasks demanded by their professions, teachers too resorted to online platforms such as WhatsApp, Google Meet, Zoom, MyClass Attendance, Xodo, TeachMint, Telegram, Google Classroom, etc. to deliver their instructions and connect with their students. The teachers shared



their experiences on how they navigated the mentioned platforms and the techniques they adopted for the delivery of instructions.

The majority of the teachers utilised several online platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Classroom whereby, they created groups and classrooms of each class for smooth communication with the students such as for providing information, study materials, etc. For live online classes, Zoom, Google meets, and Teachmint were used. There were also instances where certain teachers used mobile apps like 'MyClass Attendance' for keeping a record of the students' attendance and the 'Xodo' app for checking answer scripts.

Live online classes were held in place of regular face-to-face classes. Pictures, audio and video files, PowerPoint slides, pdf files, etc. were shared by teachers through the online platforms to augment their explanations. Some teachers even went to the extent of giving personal calls to the students to conduct oral tests as well as to check on their well-being.

### **Teachers' Appraisal of Students' Participation in the Remote Teaching-Learning Process**

The students, according to the teachers, found it rather challenging and confusing at the beginning since everything was new to them which increased miscommunication between the teachers and the students. However; they gradually managed to adapt to the system. The students learned to do self-study, gradually managed to maneuver the different educational e-platforms and equip themselves with useful technological knowledge, etc.

Almost all of the teachers expressed concerns about poor internet connectivity. Teachers, especially of primary level and rural areas shared their experiences of struggle because of the lack of accessibility of their students to smartphones. All these problems contributed to the lack of proper responses of the students towards the online teaching-learning process, among many. Despite the available alternative means of learning, given the pandemic situation, the students took advantage of the 'learn from home' situation by resorting to such behaviors as not attending the class after submitting their attendance. One such example would be, teachers would schedule online classes on platforms like Google Meet and Zoom whereby students joined the scheduled online class but instead of attentively listening to the teachers' explanations and lectures, they

got busy with other personal work, entertainment (behind the camera), etc. Another example of instances cited by the teachers was that many students would intentionally miss the class and later on give the ‘Poor network connectivity’ excuse.

It comes as no surprise that there were numerous ups and downs. However, on a positive note, despite the paradigm shift in the mode of teaching-learning, students learned how to navigate the online educational platforms, conduct self-study, and demonstrate efforts to adapt to the changes. As one teacher remarked, “Not an overwhelming response, yet not very disappointing considering the paradigm shift in learning.”

### **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF REMOTE TEACHING-LEARNING FROM TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES**

Remote teaching-learning supports students and teachers to remain connected and engaged with the content though physically not present in a traditional classroom environment. For that to function smoothly, teachers need to be vigilant and make sure students stay focused and engaged. Although remote teaching-learning may not be the best option for everyone, it is important to grasp its benefits and limitations.

#### **Advantages**

As shared by the teachers from their experiences, some of the advantages are as follows:

- It helps schools to reach out to a larger network of students who are not limited by geography.
- It allows students to attend classes from any location, one of them being, learning from the comforts of home.
- Implementation of more teaching aids such as audios, videos, PowerPoint slides, typed materials, etc. to attract the attention of the students.
- It allowed for versatility in the delivery of instruction as it paved the way to share learning materials conveniently with all the students with the click of a button.
- Significantly cost-effective and time-efficient. In addition to having the means to take virtual classes and distribution of learning materials with the click of a button, the teachers and

students could save transportation money and put an ease on the financial burden.

- Since most of the teachers practiced the habit of recording their live online classes, students have the opportunity of re-watching those recorded videos for future reference.
- Remote teaching-learning allowed the teachers to teach and deal with the students personally as well as supplement the teaching with sufficient supporting study materials.
- Online teaching from home-made work easier for teachers allowing them enough time for better lesson preparation.
- Learning from the confines of the home allowed both the teachers and the students, especially for Science subjects, to utilise their creativity by experimenting with things available at home in the absence of a laboratory.
- The stakeholders of education learned and experienced the ways and means of incorporating technology in education which opened the eyes of many.
- Students also learned to appreciate face-to-face classroom teaching-learning experiences.

### **DISADVANTAGES**

The following are some of the disadvantages of remote teaching-learning according to experiences shared by the teachers:

- The most significant drawback experienced by the teachers and students (both rural and urban) included poor network connectivity which alone could be the biggest barrier to the online teaching-learning process.
- The online teaching-learning process is not a 'one-size-fits-all' educational model. Many students, particularly those in primary school and those from low-income families, lacked access to smartphones. Moreover, not every student is capable of doing self-study at home because of unsuitable home environments. Some students learn better through direct interactions with the teacher, while some take studies lightly showing inconsistent efforts. As a result, teachers had a difficult time coping with those situations.

- Another drawback was that teachers had to be in touch with their phones/computers at all times, which led to stress, depression, not forgetting neglect of personal work.
- Many teachers had a basic understanding of technology.
- Students' informality with the teachers and administration increased rapidly since WhatsApp, a popular messenger app, was used for educational purposes.
- Students' queries irrelevant to subject matter became rampant on WhatsApp regardless of time, giving little personal space to the teacher.
- It also became difficult for the teachers to keep track of the students' academic progress.
- Many teachers and students struggled with time management juggling academic activities and domestic obligations.

### **TEACHERS' OPINIONS ON BETTER FACILITIES**

In a diverse society and rapidly changing world, the interaction among the instructor, learner, and the contents need high dispositions and skills with collaborative efforts and facilities. To communicate with learners around academic content and support learners' engagement, there is a need for proper facilities and delivery strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.

While sharing their experiences, teachers voiced their concerns on how better facilities could have enhanced the remote teaching-learning process. Poor network/internet connectivity was the most common issue faced by the teachers as well as their students. As such availability of a better internet facility was one of the most common wishes of the teachers as it would have facilitated a better learning outcome. As one teacher expressed, "Better network at all times. This is the only factor where we can carry out all possible activities and engage online". Access to smartphones by all students and laptops by all teachers, microphones, more data services, among many others were some of the facilities sought for. Many teachers conducted online classes from their educational institutions, for which they needed Wi-Fi connection in the institutions. According to some of the teachers, (i) "... there is always the world of possibilities. I feel I'm still much limited in my knowledge and access to the virtual world and that I need to keep up with the pace to meet the students'

requirements in this teaching-learning experience. Right now, I can only point towards the network glitches that kept interrupting the flow because of poor connectivity.” (ii) “Better facilities definitely will help in better delivery of instructions. However, remote teaching is not just to do with better facilities as the students’ involvement has higher weightage in the overall success rate.” (iii) “Teaching-learning process would have been carried out constructively had there been better facilities as we are faced with many technical problems – Technical support system, support from administration and people that provide and support the environment for learning.”

While many teachers advocated for greater facilities, others stressed the importance of training and equipping both teachers and students to understand and effectively use online teaching-learning platforms. Few expressed that in addition to better facilities, the students need to fulfill their part by putting in more effort and doing more self-studies for effective learning outcomes.

### **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has allowed educational institutions in Nagaland to introduce and integrate virtual modes of learning into the education system at all levels of education.
- Create an Information and Technology department in every educational institution to coordinate the teaching-learning and curricular activities that are to be conducted virtually.
- Teachers, students, and parents have learned massively about online educational platforms. However, it is only right to say that they still have a long way to go to catch up with the rest of the world.
- Give proper hands-on technological training to student-teachers as well as teachers who are already in service.

### **CONCLUSION**

To mitigate the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, an active education policy response was required, which included taking advantage of the worldwide pandemic to improve and accelerate education systems. We have the chance to rebuild it now more successfully, and we must explore how to assist teachers the best in not only coping with the crisis but also in developing the skills they

will need to thrive in the aftermath. Earlier it was assumed and believed that technology would revolutionise the field of education. However; it can be seen that not all teachers are excited to adopt and adapt technology to their teaching. Some teachers are more receptive to embracing digital solutions, while others are more resistive (Wilichowski & Cobo). Despite the tragic effects of the epidemic, this global calamity has also presented an extraordinary chance for learning. People are learning about educational systems, policymakers, instructors, students, and families' adaptation and resilience (Baron, M. et. Al.). This catastrophe has shown that high-quality education necessitates more than just technology (infrastructure and connectivity), software (platforms), and content. Teachers had to devote a great deal of time and effort to building strong relationships with their students and delivering lesson content remotely, all while evaluating students' progress and dealing with the pandemic's stress (Baron, M. et. Al.). The teaching methods practiced by the teachers and their interactions with the students have changed as a result of the pandemic. As expressed by some of the teachers, the whole experience was and is 'exhilarating', 'mixed feeling', 'challenging', 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious', 'Good but there is but in it'. In addition to having better accessibility and availability of technology for every student and teacher, moving forward, we can only work towards and hope to acquire advanced knowledge on how best to incorporate technology in the teaching-learning process be it synchronous or asynchronous learning.

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# Corona Pandemic Crisis & Post-Covid-19 Scenario: Challenges, Opportunities & Future Direction

*Gopal Kumar*

## Introduction

“Never let a good crisis go to waste.”

– Churchill

Three terms must be defined: endemic, epidemic, and pandemic. Endemic is defined as the habitual presence of a disease within a given geographic area. It may also refer to the usual occurrence of a given disease within such an area (sometimes referred to as the “background rate of disease”). Epidemic is defined as the occurrence in a community or region of a group of illnesses of similar nature, clearly in excess of normal expectancy and derived from a common or a propagated source (Fig. 2.6). Pandemic refers to an epidemic usually affecting a large proportion of the population, occurring over a large geographical area such as part of a nation, nation, continent or world (Country-to-country spread) i.e. a worldwide epidemic.

Over recent decades, the world has seen incredible progress in reducing child mortality and tackling infectious diseases. Thanks to better vaccines and other interventions, child mortality has decreased by more than 50% since 1990. We are on the verge of eradicating polio. HIV is no longer a certain death sentence. Yet there is one area where the world isn’t making much progress: pandemic preparedness. This failure should concern us all, because history has taught us many times there can be deadly global pandemic. We can’t predict when, but given the continual emergence of new pathogens, the increasing risk of a bioterror attack, and the ever increasing connectedness of



our world, there is a significant probability that a large and lethal modern-day pandemic can occur in our lifetime.

Recent years have seen at least six large-scale outbreaks – Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, severe acute respiratory syndrome, H5N1 influenza, H1N1 influenza, Middle East respiratory syndrome, and Ebola virus disease epidemic. The influenza H1N1 2009 virus (A/2009/H1N1) was the first pandemic influenza of the 21st century. It has affected the whole world and caused more than 18,000 deaths. Ebola killed more than 11 000 people and cost the world more than USD \$2 billion, according to World Bank calculations. Currently Zika virus continues to spread and consequently threatens the health of people in 34 countries.

Several events in the past decade have made us pay close attention to the risk of future pandemics. One was the outbreak of swine flu in 2009. Although H1N1 influenza wasn't as lethal as people initially feared, it called attention to our inability to track the spread of disease and develop new tools for public health emergencies. The Ebola epidemic in West Africa 4 years ago was another wake-up call, as the number of confirmed cases climbed, the death toll mounted, and local health systems collapsed. Again, the world was much too slow to respond. And every year, advances in science make it easier for somebody to create a biological weapon of mass destruction. About 100 years ago, there was influenza epidemic, which killed an estimated 50 million people.

The novel coronavirus now referred to as SARS CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus-2) was reported first in the Hubei province of China. In December, 2019, the outbreak was reported to WHO (World Health Organisation) which was later declared by WHO to be Public Health Emergency of International concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2020. WHO declared it a pandemic on March 11. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) due to severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has been a public health threat since early 2020. As on 4th November, 2020. The pandemic of SARS-CoV-2 has already caused more than 47 million infections and 1208000 deaths globally over a period of 10 months. In India, more than 8.2 million cases of COVID-19 infection are there and over 120000 deaths already occurred.

## **INCUBATION PERIOD**

After exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the incubation period is typically 5 to 6 days. It can range from 2 to 14 days.

## **SYMPTOMS**

The symptoms of COVID-19, the common cold, and the flu are akin to each other. The symptoms start with a low-grade fever followed by a sore throat and body pain. Nausea and diarrhea may then occur with worsening throat pain, malaise and joint pains. Severe body pain with nausea, high grade fever and diarrhea may follow. Breathlessness may occur with severe cough after a week. One needs to consider visiting a hospital only when there is high grade fever and difficulty in breathing.

## **HOW DOES IT SPREAD?**

The virus spreads through respiratory droplets of an infected person. It could directly spread through inhalation of droplets when you are within a metre of a coughing patient, but more often, it is by touching inanimate objects contaminated by these droplets and taking our hands near our nose and mouth.

## **WHAT IS SOCIAL DISTANCING?**

‘Social distancing’ refers to a way of creating a barrier of physical distance between two or more people so that transmission of infectious agent can be prevented or halted. It may also be termed as physical distancing. It is a traditional public health measure of separating people to curb the outbreak of infectious disease, aimed to prevent person-to-person spread of disease to interrupt transmission and checking community transmission. When does the need for social distancing occur? Infectious diseases such as COVID-19, transmitted by respiratory droplets require a certain proximity of people. Social distancing reduces transmission, mitigates COVID-19 outbreak, particularly useful in settings where community transmission is believed to have occurred, but where the linkages between cases is unclear, and where restrictions placed only on persons known to have been exposed is considered insufficient to prevent further transmission.

**WHAT IS ISOLATION?**

'Isolation' is the separation of ill persons with contagious diseases from non-infected persons to protect non-infected persons. This usually occurs in hospital settings. It is particularly effective in interrupting transmission if early detection is possible before overt viral shedding.

**WHAT IS QUARANTINE?**

Quarantine demands movement restriction of persons who are presumed to have been exposed to a contagious disease but are not ill, either because they did not become infected or because they are still in the incubation period. Quarantine may be applied at the individual or group level and usually involves restriction to the home or a designated facility. During quarantine, all individuals should be monitored for the occurrence of any symptoms. Quarantining is most successful in settings where detection of cases is prompt; contacts can be listed and traced within a short time frame with prompt issuance of quarantine. It is one of the oldest, most effective tools of controlling outbreaks & was implemented successfully as an effective measure during the SARS epidemic in 2003.

**HEALTH ISSUES: DIAGNOSIS & DIFFERENT METHODS OF TREATMENT FOR PREVENTION OF COVID-19**

The antigen test is the diagnostic test for COVID-19 in which the viral RNA is directly identified by real time reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR). This is an extremely sensitive test to identify whether someone is currently infected and active. The antibody test is to identify the immune response to earlier infection. By identifying the type of antibody positivity (IgM or IgG or both or none) we can determine whether the individual had exposure to infection or not, still has active infection or has developed long-term immunity.

**MANAGEMENT TO PREVENT COVID-19 INFECTION**

The proposition is that a community intervention comprising of the 3 pillars – physical distancing, frequent hand-washing and masks-wearing, if taken up on a mass scale as a people's movement, can possibly reduce the community transmission of Covid-19.

## Exercise

1. Involve your family member (could be spouse, parent, sibling, child) in the exercise effort.
2. Try to use any available space inside the house, around the house or the terrace for exercises. About 30 to 40 minutes of brisk walk daily would be recommended.
3. Try to do some strength training too, using household things that you can lay your hands on, like water bottles (filled with water), bags, etc. Free weight or body weight exercises such as squats, lunges, planks, etc., are helpful.
4. Do remember to warm up and stretch before the exercises.
5. Try to assign a fixed time to your exercise activity, which will ensure that you will follow your routine and won't skip it.
6. Keep an eye on your diet and temper it to suit your activity levels. Following the same diet that you were on when you were more active during the lockdown will only result in weight gain and misery.
7. Post-surgery patients should stick to the physiotherapy schedule prescribed by their surgeon or therapist.

## Diet: Recommended foods rich in antioxidants and minerals to improve immunity

- Rich in Vitamin A: Cereals, legumes, yellow and orange coloured vegetables and green leafy vegetables.
- Rich in Vitamin B (B6, B9, B12): Cereals, legumes, green leafy vegetables, fruits, nuts, soy milk, dairy products fish, chicken and egg.
- Rich in Vitamin C: Orange, lemon, guava, kiwi, gooseberry, cauliflower, tomato, capsicum and mint.
- Rich in Vitamin E: Nuts, green leafy vegetables and vegetable oils.
- Rich in Vitamin D: Egg, fatty fish, milk and its products  
Exposure to sunlight is also helpful in improving Vitamin D levels.
- Rich in iron: Cereals, legumes, dry fruits, fish, and chicken  
Rich in zinc: Wheat germ, dried beans, nuts, tofu and Sea foods.
- Rich in selenium: Cereals, nuts, mushrooms, meat and chicken  
Rich in antioxidants, condiments and spices: Garlic,

onion, ginger, pepper and green tea. It is preferred to include fish, chicken and egg instead of red meat.

### **HAVE A POSITIVE MIND**

- Handle stress in a positive way through meditation, yoga, breathing exercise, listening to music, reading or developing hobbies missed out during hectic work schedules.
- Indulge in physical activity to lower stress, boost energy, improve digestion and thereby reduce the risk of some chronic disease that could weaken your immune system further. Conserve your energy for essential activities.
- Ensure having a consistent sleep schedule that helps in maintaining your cardiac rhythm. Try to have a restful quality sleep time.
- This in turn helps to manage mood and appetite which in turn facilitates to improve immunity. Seven to eight hours of sleep is essential for us as sleep deprivation significantly weakens our immunity.

### **HOPE FOR VACCINE**

In WHO solidarity trial-interim report – no significant improvement with any trial drugs like Remdesivir, HCQ, Lopinavir/Ritonavir, Interferon, Plasma exchange therapy was seen. So now all hope is on vaccine. There are different vaccines under development (Moderna, Sputnik V/ Gamaleya, Pfizer/ BioNTech, Oxford University/ Astrazenca ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccine) which are under different phases of human trials. Some are claiming their vaccines to be effective upto 95%.

### **PROBLEMS OF STRANDED LABOURERS, UNEMPLOYMENT, ECONOMY, TRADE, COMMERCE & INDUSTRY**

Indian migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic have faced multiple hardships. With factories and workplaces shut down due to the lockdown imposed in the country, millions of migrant workers had to deal with the loss of income, food shortages and uncertainty about their future. Following this, many of them and their families went hungry. There are an estimated 139 million migrants in the country, according to the World Economic Forum. The International

Labour Organisation (ILO) predicted that due to the pandemic and the lockdown, about 400 million workers would be poverty-stricken.

The COVID-19 crisis has led to a spike in the country's unemployment rate to 27.11% for the week ended May 3, up from the 7% level before the start of the pandemic in mid-March, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) has said.

Every region is subject to substantial growth downgrades. East Asia and the Pacific will grow by a scant 0.5%. South Asia will contract by 2.7%, Sub-Saharan Africa by 2.8%, Middle East and North Africa by 4.2%, Europe and Central Asia by 4.7%, and Latin America by 7.2%. These downturns are expected to reverse years of progress toward development goals and tip tens of millions of people back into extreme poverty.

### **THE ROLES OF UNO, WHO, UNESCO, IMF IN MITIGATING CRISIS**

The United Nations response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been led by its Secretary-General and can be divided into formal resolutions at the General Assembly and at the Security Council (UNSC), and operations via its specialised agencies, chiefly the World Health Organisation in the initial stages, but involving more humanitarian-oriented agencies as the humanitarian impact became clearer, and then economic organisations, like the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Labour Organisation, and the World Bank, as the socioeconomic implications worsened. In June, 2020, the Secretary-General launched the 'UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19'; the UN has also launched a global vaccination initiative. The 'UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19' is a policy document issued by the United Nations Secretary-General on June 25, 2020, which aims to coordinate the United Nations System to "save lives, protect societies, recover better". The policy document sets out what must be done to deliver a global response "that leaves no-one behind", reduces global vulnerability to future pandemics, builds resilience to future shocks, especially climate change, and addresses "the severe and systemic inequalities exposed by the pandemic"

The FAO and partner agencies have been warning of an increase in hunger since June. On June 16, 2020, the UN's office for Latin

America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), together with the FAO, proposed in a new study 10 measures to avoid increased hunger in the region, including through an “anti-hunger grant”, as they warn those living in extreme poverty in the region could surpass 83 million by the end of 2020 due to the impacts of the pandemic. On July 14, 2020 Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the FAO, launched its comprehensive *COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme* to ward off a global food emergency during and after the pandemic and to provide “medium to long-term development responses for food security and nutrition”, costing an initial \$1.2 billion investment.

### **UNAIDS**

On May 14, 2020, UNAIDS initiated a petition from global leaders requesting that when a successful COVID-19 vaccine is developed, it be available free to all. On August 27, 2020, UNAIDS warned in a new report, *Rights in a Pandemic – Lockdowns, Rights and Lessons from HIV in the Early Response to COVID-19*, that some of the world’s most marginalised communities have experienced violence and other rights abuses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**

UNESCO has highlighted the need to fight COVID-19 misinformation and the plight of children’s education during the pandemic and attempted to address this through research and policy briefs. On March 5, 2020 UNESCO announced that 290 million students globally were stuck at home. On March 10, UNESCO highlighted the unprecedented shuttering of schools globally. On April 6, 2020, UNESCO invited young innovators, data scientists and designers, especially those now out of school, to join a month-long hackathon, CodeTheCurve, to provide digital solutions to the global pandemic.

### **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

The UNEP has commented on the collapse of the fossil fuel industry and warned of further zoonotic pandemics. On June 10, 2020, the UNEP and partners released a new report, *Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2020*, showing that renewable energy was more cost-effective than ever, as COVID-19 impacted the fossil fuel

industry, “providing an opportunity to prioritise clean energy in national economic recovery packages and bring the world closer to meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement”.

### **United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)**

The UNHRC has warned of a severe impact on refugees and has been attempting to mitigate this impact through policies and securing funding. On April 1, 2020, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees outlined a series of measures the UNHRC was taking to respond to the coronavirus public health emergency and prevent further spread, especially those to reinforce health and the ‘WASH’ systems (water, sanitation and hygiene), including distributing soap and increasing water access.

### **United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)**

UNICEF has been active since March, 2020, in offering advice and conducting research on the impact of the coronavirus on children, highlighting especially the plight of vulnerable children, including child refugees, in fragile states, particularly the problem of maintaining routine vaccination.

### **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

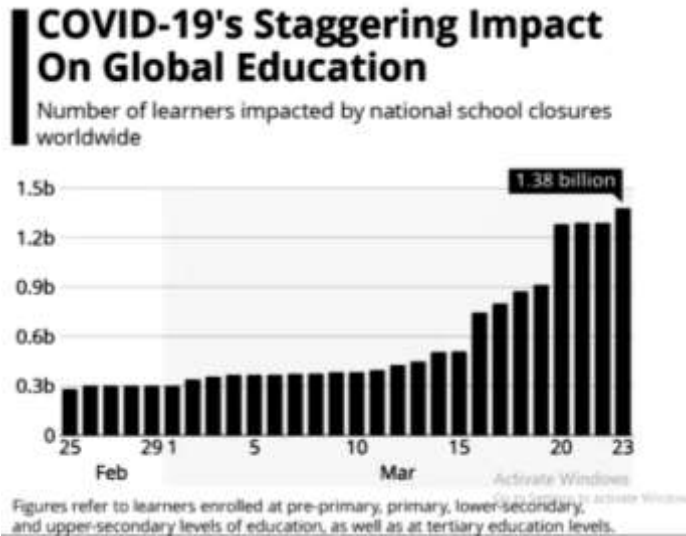
The UNFPA has warned of serious impacts on women and girls, including millions of unintended pregnancies. On March 27, 2020, the Executive Director of the UNFPA pledged support for those suffering from invisible impacts of the pandemic, including women and girls with disrupted access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health care.

## **EDUCATION SCENARIO DURING CORONA PANDEMIC & NEW MEDIA**

The COVID-19 has resulted in schools shut all across the world. Globally, over 1.2 billion children are out of the classroom. As a result, education has changed dramatically, with the distinctive rise of e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. Research suggests that online learning has been shown to increase retention of information, and take less time, meaning the changes coronavirus have caused might be here to stay. Even before COVID-19, there was already high growth and adoption in education



technology, with global edtech investments reaching US\$18.66 billion in 2019 and the overall market for online education projected to reach \$350 Billion by 2025. Whether it is language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools, or online learning software, there has been a significant surge in usage since COVID-19.



There are, however, challenges to overcome. Some students without reliable internet access and/or technology struggle to participate in digital learning; this gap is seen across countries and between income brackets within countries. For example, whilst 95% of students in Switzerland, Norway, and Austria have a computer to use for their schoolwork, only 34% in Indonesia do, according to OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) data.

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## CHAPTER 23

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# Challenges and Opportunities during and Post-Corona

*Meenakshi Yadav*

### ABSTRACT

The pandemic has pushed the world to drastically reinvent ways of coping with the 'new normal'. After the initial phase of complete overhaul, it is critical to understand the short and long-term impact and future measures. The coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19) is profoundly affecting life around the globe. It has changed people's lives; people now have to stay indoors by choice or by the order of the government. Hence, across the globe, the spread of the disease has affected a vast region of the world and major sectors like education, agriculture, healthcare, economy, tourism to name a few ones. The pandemic has presented an opportunity to learn from unexpected situation, take the best of what happened and use these lessons to transform this once-a-generation crisis into a once-a-generation opportunity to develop new areas of growth and deepen links to the global economy. Those that take the opportunity to adapt and transform will emerge stronger. We need to get some balance back into this debate and not lose sight of the positive lessons in our transition into the post-pandemic world. They are still with us, but at this point we need to work harder to remember them. We need to be thoughtful about why things feel so challenging and workout how we can apply these lessons to the different, more complex kind of challenges we will face in the post-pandemic world. The solution lies in the collaborative approaches.

*Keywords:* Geopolitical, micro small and medium enterprises, healthcare, education, ballooning unemployment, ed-tech platforms, investments

While a global pandemic has been a looming risk for decades, COVID-19 has come as a shock to society, health systems, economies, and governments worldwide. The coronavirus (Covid –19) had been generated from china as the very first case was noticed in Wuhan, city of china in December 2019 caused dramatic and unprecedented upheaval to socio-economic norms In due course of time, this contagious disease was spread-out throughout China. The

coronavirus COVID-19 is an on-going pandemic that made the World Health Organisation declare outbreak. Till today, COVID-19 pandemic is on a trajectory to cause catastrophic global upheaval with the potential to alter geopolitical and socio-economic norms. In the midst of extraordinary challenges and uncertainty, and countless personal tragedies, leaders are under pressure to make decisions on managing the immediate impact of the pandemic and its consequences, decisions that will shape the state of the world for years to come.

COVID-19 has impacts upon health systems, governments, education, agriculture, businesses and society as a whole. This fact has resulted in an unprecedented technical-socio-economic earthquake that has left many sectors seeking emergency COVID-19-related unemployment benefits. The coronavirus pandemic is wreaking havoc globally, leaving governments and communities struggling to find a response. This opinion-paper reviews challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions for the post-COVID-19 era that focuses on Indian sub-continent specially in concern to health, education and economy. What might be the silver linings in the crisis and how might leaders use this moment to build a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable world is the purpose of this paper. In this article the main objective is to provide imperative information on how health, education and economy were impacted by pandemic in India and secondly, discussing about strategic measures and technological measures initiated by Indian government to overcome the adverse impact of this pandemic. It is an effort to overview new perspectives on the post-pandemic future, in support of efforts to proactively and collectively shape the future we want. The views represented are solely those of the authors.

## **CHALLENGES DURING CORONA**

The outbreak of Covid 19 has had caused significant social, political and economic consequences worldwide. Even though the current crisis can bring with it opportunities for personal growth and family cohesion, disadvantages may outweigh these benefits. Anxiety, lack of peer contact and reduced opportunities for stress regulation are main concerns. It's a global crisis, a great challenge and a health crisis; however, it is much more than that. The diverse sectors in India have been subjected to great challenges caused by the widespread pandemic to the citizens. Most of the country's diverse sectors that

have faced challenges as a result of the disease have ceased to operate while only a few of them operating for specified hours only. Due to the high number and level of how the virus is contagious, many industries have suffered deeply.

The Challenges that were faced by the pandemic were dreadful to many, from individuals, to businesses, all the way up to even countries. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is profoundly affecting life around the globe. Isolation, contact restrictions and economic shutdown impose a complete change to the psychosocial environment in India. The COVID-19 created many crises that will leave scars. It changed people life; people now have to stay indoor by choice or by the order of the government. Hence, across the globe, the spread of the disease has affected a vast region of the world and major sectors like education, agriculture, healthcare, economy, tourism to name a few. To be very precise let's focus on three major area – health, economy and education.

## **HEALTH**

The infection was so contagious that it is spreading every single day and the healthcare professionals and healthcare bodies are struggling hard to safeguard every infected individual around the globe and required more attention. The COVID-19 pandemic has put some health systems under immense pressure and stretched others beyond their capacity. The healthcare sector in India, already in a fragile financial state during the pre-COVID times, has been adversely impacted by the onset of pandemic. Government's Atma-nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan – although a laudable long-term strategy, does not cater to the ongoing distress of the private healthcare providers who are a key stakeholder in the war against COVID-19. There was acute crisis in the healthcare facilities which required huge investments in making facilities prepared for infection control and prevention, creating infrastructure for isolation and COVID treatment, as well as equipping them with appropriate medical supplies and additional healthcare workforce.

Through the entire outbreak, India has been facing the challenge of shortage of healthcare workers whether it was due to travel restrictions imposed under the lock down, workers being infected with the virus or quarantined due to the exposure, or setting-in of fear psychosis that has led to many front line workers now returning to their home town.

Moreover, due to violations of the lock down and standard operating procedures (SOPs), the rapidly increasing number of cases created a burden on the healthcare system. Moreover, India has limited testing capacity, so most COVID-19 tests are missing their mark even as the virus spreads. COVID-19 has shifted the important work carried out by health professionals to the forefront of all of our minds. Yet, despite the applause these workers often receive, they were at a high risk of catching the viral infection [COVID-19] and they needed appropriate personal protective equipment. In spite of this, unfortunately they faced threats and were exposed to violence too. Many cases of attacks throughout the country on health care workers, doctors and nurses were reported.

## **ECONOMY**

The outbreak of the worldly spreading COVID-19 was not merely a health issue, as to the misfortune of millions around the globe; the virus was a shattering event for economies, public policies, international politics, and world trade. Its spread has left national economies and businesses counting the costs, as governments struggle with new lock down measures to tackle the spread of the virus. The economic impact of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic in India has been largely disruptive. India's growth in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year 2020 went down to 3.1% according to the Ministry of Statistics.

The COVID-19 pandemic is fast moving, making some existing crisis plans unable to handle it, and making businesses suffer quite an impact, the huge drop in revenues forced them to adjust their strategies and forced businesses to change the way they operate. Small and micro business suffered larger decline than medium and large businesses in business activity. All manufacturing industries were affected by the crisis over the period of past one year. There were major challenges faced by the manufacturing units of companies even after the process of unlocking has been initiated. It includes hurdles such as mounting costs and comparatively low or no revenue due to shortage of labour leading to a reduction in the level of production, markets are not fully open therefore limited sale, the employers have been advised to make arrangements for labourers or workers to stay at the premise of the factory. This is the case of an established company.

The COVID-19 pandemic has withered the Indian Economy by bringing it to a halt. The impact of the lock down ranges from rich to poor. A sharp decline was noticed in India's industrial production from April when the nation went into lock down and most of the production houses were shut completely.

Not to be missed are the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) who are an integral part of the manufacturing sector and are likely to face more challenges in operation. The loans guarantee against the Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) and investment facilities provided to MSMEs are more or less bank-centric and pay little attention to providing the money immediately to the MSMEs to restart their business, pay salaries and also for other operating costs. The loss of income is primarily affecting the broad strata of the population that are living in or vulnerable to poverty, and people working in activities that are more exposed to layoffs and pay cuts and, in general, those in precarious employment.

People lost their jobs and way of income because of the virus and the safety measures that were taken which requires social distancing and isolating yourself from others affected businesses greatly. Unemployment rates have increased across major economies.

### **BALLOONING UNEMPLOYMENT**

The latest unemployment figures, released by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), are another evidence of economic weakness. The CMIE data show that nearly five million or 50 lakh salaried jobs were lost in July, taking the total number of layoffs in the formal sector to over 1.8 crore.

The unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 and the lock down have shattered the economy of India in a brutal way. It resulted in a further increase in the unemployment rate in India and a fall in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected that the GDP of the Indian economy would contract by 4.5 % in the year 2020 and would be 6 percent in 2021. Without enough jobs, households incomes is under strain and the economic recovery is sluggish. From contraction in growth to rising inflation and unemployment, challenges are aplenty.

### **EDUCATION**

We are living amidst what is potentially one of the greatest threats in our lifetime to global education, a gigantic educational crisis. With the

closure of educational institutions during the lock down, approximately 1.72 billion learners have been affected worldwide, and around 32 crore in India alone, resulting in high socio-economic costs for education stakeholders. The pandemic has starkly highlighted the fragility of our education systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history. The inaccessibility to physical classrooms encouraged ed-tech platforms to announce free live sessions, thereby questioning the role of education institutions.

Moreover, like many developing countries, India have very unequal education systems, and these negative impacts have been felt disproportionately by poor children. What should we be worried about in this phase of the crisis that might have an immediate impact on children and youth? The crisis is exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults— those living in poor or rural areas, girls, refugees, persons with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons – to continue their learning.

Covid has hampered the provision of essential services to children and communities like Losses in learning, Increased dropout rates including access to nutritious food, Children missed their most important meal of the day under ‘mid-day plan’ scheme. Many children do not have a desk, books, internet connectivity, a laptop at home, or supportive parents.

## **OPPORTUNITIES POST CORONA**

The COVID-19 crisis has affected societies and economies around the globe and will permanently reshape our world as it continues to unfold. While the fallout from the crisis is both amplifying familiar risks and creating new ones, change at this scale also creates new openings for managing systemic challenges, and ways to build back better.

Covid-19 has had an era-defining impact on both our personal and professional lives. The acceleration of remote working has seen businesses of all sizes turn to technology to meet the needs of a newly distributed workforce and maintain operational efficiency. While 2020 produced few new technological or business developments, it certainly accelerated many technology trends already in motion. In 2021, as we venture into a post-Covid-19 era, we’ll see these trends continue to take off at speed, with new internet-of-

things (IoT) applications, technologies, and solutions reaching every sector.

## RECOVER BETTER

Public health at the centre of development: Surely India needs to spend a lot more on public health, not just on reimbursing costs to the poor, which certainly gives temporary results. Its focus should be prevention in order to maintain primary health, which depends on clean water, clean air, green spaces, proper housing, drainage systems, etc. These are no longer welfare spending, they are part of economic growth. India could be a major manufacturing base for vaccines, and it could provide facilities and training for many developing countries, and establish R&D for early detection and monitoring of such future situations. The large pharma base will also help and gain in that process, provided it takes all measures to eliminate pollution. State governments need to develop comprehensive public health policies and comparable programmes with serious investments to develop institutional facilities and human resources.

In 2021, the rise of telemedicine and remote diagnosis will see healthcare professionals able to proactively monitor, support and provide care for these patients' health at home. Consumer interest in wearable health devices, such as ECG and blood pressure monitors, will accelerate as patients appreciate insight into their own health and the ability to share data with their doctor remotely, for an instant health evaluation.

On 12 May the Prime Minister, in an address to the nation, said that the coronavirus crisis should be seen as an opportunity, laying emphasis on domestic products and “economic self-reliance”, an *Atmanirbhar Bharat* (transl. *Self-reliant India*) through a *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan*. There be a boon for e-retailers who can ensure contactless delivery of essentials at the consumers' doorsteps. Companies that provide software facilitating online education and other remote working tools should see increased subscriptions. Remote working will increase demand for home broadband and virtual private network (VPN) services benefitting telcos. This is also the time for the economy to go cash light as digital payments may become the norm, creating a boom for fintech payment companies.

Covid-19 crisis has stimulated innovation within the education sector. We have seen innovative approaches in support of education and training continuity: from radio and television to take-home



packages all over the world. Countries like India will be able to increase their teachers' digital skills. Radio and TV stations will recognise their key role in supporting national education goals – and hopefully, improve the quality of their programming understanding their immense social responsibility. Parents will be more involved in their children's education process, and ministries of education will have a much clearer understanding of the gaps and challenges (in connectivity, hardware, integration of digital tools in the curriculum, teacher's readiness) that exist in using technology effectively and act upon that. All of this can strengthen the future education system in a country. Distance learning solutions were developed thanks to quick responses by governments and partners all over the world supporting education continuity. Needless to say, the pandemic has transformed the centuries-old, chalk-talk teaching model to one driven by technology. This disruption in the delivery of education is pushing policymakers to figure out how to drive engagement at scale while ensuring inclusive e-learning solutions and tackling the digital divide. It is time for the Indian higher education system to reflect and proactively respond to the challenges and shoulder their responsibilities at such times to demonstrate their commitment to society. This pandemic has made all the educational schools across the world to adopt teaching online. Courses are conducted online, examinations are conducted online, assignments are submitted through email. For countries like India, this is a good opportunity to strengthen the internet connectivity across rural India.

Among many economic sectors, the higher education sector is undergoing a tectonic shift right now. The speed of these closures and the rapid move to distance learning has allowed inapt time for planning or reflection on both the potential risks to safeguard against and the inherent opportunities to leverage. Institutions and students alike are under pressure to not lose academic time and re-invent their teaching-learning in the only possible way – go completely online. With every crisis comes deep challenges and opportunities for transformation – past education crises have shown that it is possible to build back better. What several futurists and education technologists have been forecasting for long, is now happening.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The new start after lock down will certainly offer opportunities and carry risks for all. Our governance systems, in many ways our democracies, will continue to be at the heart of this journey.

Extraordinary measures have been adopted by governments, the private sector and individuals in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that are likely to have a profound impact on our geopolitical environment. India needs to have a clear policy to survive and grow in the post-corona world.

The mission of all education systems is the same. It is to overcome the learning crisis we were already living and respond to the pandemic we are all facing. The challenge today is to reduce as much as possible the negative impact this pandemic will have on learning and schooling and build on this experience to get back on a path of faster improvement in learning. As education systems cope with this crisis, they must also be thinking of how they can recover stronger, with a renewed sense of responsibility of all actors and with a better understanding and sense of urgency of the need to close the gap in opportunities and assuring that all children have the same chances for a quality education. We have also been reminded of the essential role of teachers and that governments and other key partners have an ongoing duty of care to education personnel. The good news is that many of the improvements, initiatives, and investments that school systems will have to make might have a positive long-lasting effect.

As countries strive to deal with the economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need for new evidence and research to improve our understanding of the economic crisis in developing countries and the appropriate policy responses. To get the economy moving, Government of India and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced various measures which included policy changes, reforms, relief packages, bank loans, and infrastructure building plans and so on. No doubt all of these steps were necessary and timely, but on-ground implementations and the help reaching the needy is more important in the time of such an erratic crisis. These measures are required to boost the consumption demand which has been slumped by the lock down.

Youth employment is one area in which India needs to go a long way. For quite some time, India focused and to some extent succeeded in creating high-end jobs created by intensive capital, both domestic and foreign. After Covid-19, the strategy should be to develop policies and institutional frameworks to create entry-level, mid-level and low-end jobs in large numbers, mostly in rural and

semi-urban areas. Financial institutions need to come out with innovative lending that creates jobs with limited capital.

This pandemic has highlighted the pressing need to expand our healthcare infrastructure, so we are better equipped to handle emergencies. We need improved coordination between the Centre and different states, strong disease surveillance systems, a ready stock of critical lifesaving drugs and medical equipment, more diagnostic labs and modern hospitals in every district and also fast tracking of telemedicine/e-consultations. This is one sector where the private sector needs to step up and partner with the Government more actively so that basic healthcare is accessible and affordable for all and the Government's decision to provide Viability Gap Funding will hopefully facilitate their entry.

Finally, Covid-19 is a global disaster for which the world was totally unprepared. But the world and India must draw some major lessons out of this unpleasant experience and turn it into a positive one. Doing more of the same after the lock down is fully lifted is not at all an option. Let us hope that a new thinking process will lead to better policies that helps us come out much stronger, with more resilient economies and health systems. The economy is not just numbers; real progress and social stability are needed – that is the biggest lesson from this Covid-19 disaster.

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# Corona Pandemic Crisis and Post-Covid-19 Scenario: Challenges, Opportunities & Future Directions

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## ABSTRACT

Coronavirus is an infectious disease, it affects people in a terrible way. This framework articulates the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. In it we can clearly identify how people suffered during the pandemic, people became unemployed, new normals such as quarantine, and home isolation, education scenarios during covid-19 scenario, the study courses were conducted during the lockdown, the role of economy, trade, commerce and industry, people affected by isolation and anxiety, role of physical activities such as yoga, meditation etc., the state of the arts, literature and aesthetics, treatment for corona, the role of UNO, WHO and UNESCO, discourse on post covid-19 scenario prevention of virus spreading and what ways the government made to recover from it.

*Keywords:* COVID-19, pandemic, unemployed, quarantine, isolation, lockdown, education, economy, treatment, prevention

## Introduction

An epidemic is defined as “an outbreak of an infectious disease that spreads rapidly and affects many people at the same time.” The word “pandemic” has a Greek origin meaning an epidemic of a contagious disease that has spread across several countries and continents infecting a large number of people. The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is an ongoing pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). It was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. Its most common symptoms are

fever, dry cough, tiredness and its serious symptoms were difficulty in breathing, chest pain or pressure and loss of speech or movement.

## **LIFE, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE DURING CORONA PANDEMIC CRISIS**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought drastic routine changes to the world's population. Lockdown has been recognised as the best way to stop spreading virus. Amidst the lockdown in society, multiple issues related to social, economical, educational, psychological levels and many more has created the ruinous impact on the lives of the people. Most of the people have been mentally disturbed by home isolation and living in anxiety. Domestic abuse and violence have increased since social isolation and quarantine measures came into force around the world.

In hospitals, doctors and nurses face traumatic potential large in extent. According to one survey, after working in isolation with critically sick patients, around 20% of healthcare workers face post-traumatic effects. Surrounded daily by death, resource constraints, having no time to spend with families and vivid imageries of tubes and life support machines, workers face an additional element of trauma through “mental anguish”.

Isolation measures have a particularly acute impact on women. The chances of women are prone to violence has increased, risk grows even greater when families have household stress and also have to cope with economic crisis and job losses. People living in conflict-affected areas are also extremely endangered due to high population density, close propinquity in living conditions; deficient water, sanitation and hygiene; and inadequate health, social and protection services.

The world has entered a new culture because no one knows when things will return to normal. Covid-19 pandemic is altering individual life. We cannot go out without masks and sanitising our hands, we cannot travel internationally or even locally, and we may not be able to meet our friends and relatives. More than that, the pandemic is changing our social and work life in more complex way.

## **HEALTH ISSUE: DIAGNOSIS AND DIFFERENT METHODS OF TREATMENT FOR PREVENTION OF COVID-19**

The basic precautions to avoid spreading coronavirus is washing hands often, maintaining social distance, staying at home, wearing masks, avoid touching face etc., Allopathic treatments impede viral

infection by targeting majorly endocytosis (cellular process in which substances are brought into the cell) and angiotensin-converting enzyme (Ace) receptor signaling.

Ayurvedic remedy was able to alleviate some of the symptoms of COVID-19 before time when compared to the conventional route of allopathic treatment. The clinical trial was conducted in three different hospitals and the patients were given the combination treatment of an Ayurvedic remedy known as CORIVAL Life Sciences' "Immunofree", and Biogetica's 'Regimmune' which is a Nutraceutical. The reports says it has the better results when compared to the conventional treatment for COVID-19.

According to the National Institutes of Health, there were two drugs that can help manage COVID-19 in some people with severe symptoms who are receiving treatment in the hospital. They are VEKLURY and dexamethasone. VEKLURY is an antiviral drug and it is the first medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat COVID-19. It may slow the replication of the virus in the body. Dexamethasone may help manage symptoms in people with COVID-19 by decreasing infection. They also may reduce the risk of death in some people with severe symptoms.

There are four categories of vaccines in clinical trials: WHOLE VIRUS, PROTEIN SUBUNIT, VIRAL VECTOR and NUCLEIC ACID (RNA AND DNA). Some of them try to bring in the antigen into the body, others use the body's own cells to make the viral antigen. The first group includes healthcare and frontline workers. The second group to receive COVID-19 vaccine will be persons over and under 50 years of age with existing simultaneously with and usually independently of another medical condition.

## **LINGUISTIC, ART, LITERATURE AND AESTHETIC DURING CORONA CRISIS**

Barry Davret writes, "The act of creation brings joy, a sense of pride, and helps you forget about the ills of the world, at least for a little while" In this time of lockdown, the part of art becomes more pivotal to our lives. Art is serving various functions during the Covid-19 lockdown. It is an imaginative instrument, in that we can enter other worlds, even in the quarantine of our own homes. Corona can't lock up or lockdown our artistic imagination.

It is a rare experience for lexicographers to observe a rapid increase rise in use of a single word in a very short stretch of time.

Covid-19, a short form of coronavirus disease 2019, and its various demonstration has done just that. It is a persistent theme of lexicography that great social change brings great linguistic change in this crisis. Meanwhile technical jargon has become part of the daily lexicon and the world of epidemiology has reared into existence words – such as Covid-19 and Sars-Cov-2 – which have shaped again the face of human life history.

The internet is awash with lockdown poems. Social medias are filled with precaution measures and corona updates. Meme creators also stepped up and did their public services. People used their writings to share their feelings and break their loneliness in the lockdown. Number of poems, quotes and literary writings has reached its maximum goal. Many artists have found more time to develop their aesthetic skills. Art and literature played a vital role to vanishing anxiety and isolation

### **PROBLEMS OF STANDARD LABOURERS, UNEMPLOYMENT, ECONOMY, TRADE, COMMERCE & INDUSTRY**

When the covid-19 pandemic have shutdown the economy, one of the first things on everyone's mind was – job. The pandemic created the biggest spike in unemployment. Each generation has felt the weight of the pandemic in their own unique ways. Young workers have likely been impacted. As India remains in lockdown over covid-19 crisis, daily wages workers are among the worst hit. Laborers were seen in returning to their native places. Trains, buses have also been suspended across the country. Social workers were seen disturbing food to the homeless.

As the virus spread around the world and workplaces closed, millions of workers lost part or all of their incomes. Even if they were still working, many of them had to accept shorter hours and/or wage cuts in different industries. In some instances, wage cuts were sort out in communal positioning between employees and employers. As a result of lockdown, people started work from home. But the demerit is most of the workers income was reduced and work hours were increased.

The distress of working from home in abnormal times is the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has twisted the way we live and work. Early in the year, many workers were suddenly required to work at home while communicating with the workplace by phone or fax or modem. Quite suddenly, countless individuals faced many challenges.

Working from home often makes it harder to concentrate due to surrounding distractions such as distracting noises, poor network connector, non-availability of electronic gadgets and interrupting children. Many of the women were unavailable to take up paid work because of additional household duties linked to being held such as childcare and home – schooling of children.

According to the center for monitoring Indian economy one in every four employed persons lost their jobs in March and April. Mahesh Vyas (MD and CEO, CMIE) says, “The estimated loss of employment between March and April 2020 is 114 million. Given that the total count of employed is around 400 million, the loss of 114 million implies that one in every four employed persons lost their jobs.” CMIE data shows that the unemployment rate soared to 27.11% by May 3 from 6.74% on March 15. According to CMIE, the unemployment rate is the highest in urban areas, where the majority of hotspots of located. The unemployment rate in urban areas is 29.22% and in rural areas is 26.16 %.

The coronavirus outbreak is an ongoing global situation it continues to impact economies and industries worldwide. Some countries losing market share of US imports from Asia. Mainland China lost over 6.45 % market share of US imports since the outbreak in December 2019. Although several of the top US import trade partners from Asia had declining values since the outbreak. Singapore has been able to increase its exports to the US by nearly 13% from Q4 2019 to Q1 2020. Singapore increased its export to the US by 10% for the same commodity and time frame.

## **EDUCATION SCENARIO DURING CORONA PANDEMIC AND NEW MEDIA**

Due to pandemic, schools, colleges and university education are being harmfully affected. It has resulted in schools shutting all across the world. Most governments decided to momentarily close educational institutions in an attempt to bring down the effect of covid-19. As a result, education has changed excessively with a particular rise of online learning, where by teacher is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. But the main impediment is the non-availability of high speed internet in remote and rural areas. The next issue is the financial crisis of the students.

It is the largest descriptions of global education systems in history when the pandemic first hit around one and half billion



students around the world were sent home as schools were closed. The lucky ones were able to pursue their studies through online but for many, even in developed countries that was not an option. The world was already struggling to come to grips with educational inequality. Challenges involved in digital learning remain. The foundational problems are still there a lot of parents don't understand technology and a lot of families don't have internet or digital technology at home.

Technology has appeared as a lifeline for the academic world due to the pandemic. Online classes for the new normal. UN report says, billion students in over 190 countries were affected till August previous year by the lockdown. There were several apps such as Zoom, Google Meet, Teams were used by teachers to teach their students. Lockdown also makes the children to distract from the studies. Many students complained that they could not understand anything from online classes and poor connection. In online classes, physical activity is less and mental activity is more, which makes students more academic oriented. The positive effect of online classes is students have become more technologically updated. They got to know more about various apps and programs for education. Their knowledge about electronic gadgets such as computers, smartphone, radio and television are getting increased.

Government initiated 'TV classrooms' as online classes prove to be a strenuous during lockdown. Educational programs keep children committed to creativity and achievement for a lifetime. With India under lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic, Google-owned YouTube has seen a 20.5% rush in subscribers' base in the country. To help students and teachers during lockdown, Google India launched 'YouTube Learning Destination' recently. It helps student, teachers and parents find useful and finest-quality learning content created by education – focused creators on YouTube. WhatsApp becomes medium of education for students amid lockdown. Mostly study materials are being shared by teachers via WhatsApp. If any student does not understand the topic or content, teachers make them understand it through an audio message. They send lesson oriented photograph for better understanding. Some teachers make a video of them teaching lessons and send it through WhatsApp to their students.

Many families faced issues such as financial crisis and lack of internet connection. A large part of the society still cannot afford to

buy good quality smartphone or laptop which is essential for the online educational system. More and more people have become jobless which increases the seriousness of this problem. Research has shown that students in online classes performed better than those receiving traditional classroom and face-to-face interaction. It makes the students to be more independent. Online classes bring education to students' home. Parents are comprehensively encouraging of virtual schooling, with 76% saying they are likely to keep up more online education at home, even after the hazard of COVID-19 has passed.

### **Changing Life Styles: Role of Yoga, Meditation, Spiritual, Physical, Psychological, Mental Training To Overcome Corona Psychosis, Trauma**

COVID-19 made us think about how we use up our time. Before quarantine, much of our lives had been gobbled by several activities. One wonders if social distancing might become the unusual standard, so splitting time for spiritual life-building can become part of the change of filling the space of isolation. With our changing lifestyles owing to the coronavirus pandemic, this age-old exercise has welfare that are wide ranging. And at the same time Covid-19 has caused many people to face increased levels of stress, insomnia, and anxiety. Anxiety can cause rapid heart rate, palpitations, and chest pain. Yoga helps to calm that down. Yoga is the best forms of physical, mental and spiritual practice. It is best suited for lockdown period. "Practice of yoga takes care of all these mental issues." It helps manage stress and anxiety and keeps a person relaxed.

Meditation can be regarded as an all-purpose exercise which will take care of our body, mind and soul. With well-ordered practices of meditation, remarkably higher levels of positive effects and low levels of anxiety and stress. Physicians referred "Medical Yoga Therapy". Powerful and effectual yoga therapy serves corona affected patients with physical and mental challenges. It is safe and effective as it has healing power in children too. During this critical time, meditation is a blessing in disguise. Meditation can help prevent coronary heart disease, heart attack and re-infarction if practiced habitually.

The pandemic had led to serious financial despair, illness, and death. It changed our routine life and daily structure. There are thus a span of psychic responses including grief, loss, and mourning. The current pandemic is bringing us number of losses. Many losses are of

people including our family members, loved ones, friends, neighbors, people we know and people across the world we have never known. But our losses are of other important things too such as school, work, connection, sports, confidence, time with friends, relatives, celebrations, normalcy.

People use strategies to reduce stress throughout the day, including assertions that support strong mindset such as absolute acceptance, self-compassion, positive challenge estimations as well as mind-body exercises that reduce stress reactions such as breathing exercises, meditation, physical activities and social support. And people, who are recovering from COVID, may need rehabilitation to manage the aftermath of COVID-19. Some may need physical rehabilitation to help them continue their normal activities after staying long in the hospital or ensuing periods of extended isolation. Physical therapy can help people with decreased strength begin to move more, gradually building up their staying power.

### **THE ROLES OF UNO, WHO, UNESCO, IMF IN MITIGATION CRISIS**

The UN chief has announced an renovated plan to counter COVID-19, which highlights the require for countries to act in concert and outlines ways to stop transmission of the virus, safeguard people's lives and their livelihoods, and learn from the crisis to build back. U.N. Chief says, "A pandemic drives home the essential interconnectedness of our human family preventing the further spread of covid-19 is a shared responsibility for us all. The United Nations including the World Health Organisation – is fully mobilised. As part of our human family, we are working 24/7 with governments, providing International guidance, helping the world take on this. We stand in full solitary with you. We are in this together – and we will get through this together."

All countries aims at the same: stop transmission of the virus and prevent the spread in order to save lives. The UN's health agency, The World Health Organisation (WHO), has played a vital role in blocking the spread of coronavirus, ever since the first cases were identified. WHO, in line with global guidance, suggest that all countries strengthen alert and increase their level of preparedness and response systems to identify, control and care for new cases of COVID-19. WHO considers that lockdown measures and social distancing need to be implemented in a thorough manner such a

closures of schools, colleges and universities, performance of remote working policies, minimizing the use of public transport and deferral of less important travels. People may be misled by some wrong information on the internet, In the midst of this confusion, WHO is producing accurate and useful guidance that can helpful to save lives.

Since the beginning of the pandemic outbreak, UNESCO has riposted to the COVID-19 false information, fake news and groundless rumors with a series of initiatives aimed at ensuring veracity and supporting authentic and standard information. UNESCO is totally devoted to supporting governments for knowledge, distance learning, open science and culture sharing, as rudimentary means to stick together and tighten the bonds of our shared humanity. The result of COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown measures have caused, many craftspeople, have been cut off from practice and underprivileged of opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge. UNESCO has organisational a series of trainings and online courses for craftspeople and designers to ensure that the learning process does not stop.

The IMF had begun to increase the number of social safeguards to its programs before COVID-19, such as social spending floors, social benefits and transfers, and expanding unemployment assistance. As IMF Managing Director Kristina Georgieva has noted ahead of the October 2020 IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings, “the global economy is beginning to climb back from the depths of the crisis but this calamity is far from over.” In this unprecedented time, the IMF is striving to support countries by providing policy advice, financial support, capacity development, and debt relief for the poorest.

## **DISCOURSE ON POST COVID-19 SCENARIO**

It may not be possible to predict the post COVID-19 landscape, but it is still possible to plan for it. Planning scenario is an implement designed to help organisations plan for uncertain futures. It has been used massively by organisations whose performance is endangered to major economic, social, political, and environmental shifts. COVID-19 has placed all zones within this context of uncertainty, requiring them to think and plan in new ways. Scenarios are both feasible and demanding.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has not been doused yet, many countries raised nationwide lockdowns to restart their

economies, with citizens talking over the surfaces of reopening over social media. After lockdown, giving people employment is the most important step. They may not die from corona but will die definitely from starvation.

Conspicuous disparities in COVID-19 infections and results appear to reflect existing economic discriminations. The world after COVID-19 is unlikely to return to the world that was. Many trends already undertaken in the global economy are being hastened by the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has clashed politics by affecting the governing & political systems of multiple countries, isolation and deaths of multiple political personalities and re-scheduling of elections due to fears of the virus spreading. Additionally, in some cases, the pandemic has constituted multiple challenges to democracy, leading to it being fatally debilitated and spoiled.

While some artists are exhausted on screens, others have found there are some advantages unique to digital and socially-distant projects. Conceptual artist Agnieszka Kurant says “The idea that artworks are completed once and for all is no longer tenable”. The pandemic has posed even greater hurdles for musicians, unlike visual artists; musicians need an audience filling crowded concert halls. Covid scenario becomes the concept for several arts such as masks, sanitizer, anxiety, fear of isolation etc. If we look at the phone, newspaper or TV, a lot of things come about corona. Singers composing songs about corona impacts directors making movies about virus spreading.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, India and the world have a long benefaction of successful efforts to prevent or cure widespread infections. Hence, India has the opportunity to reverse disease predictions with strict lockdown measures, increasing case detection, social distancing, isolation and quarantining the contacts. The COVID-19 crisis has affected societies and economies around the globe and will permanently reshape our world as it continues to unfold. A long time span of the lockdown might be more catastrophic in India than in wealthier countries like the UK or Australia, and it could result in serious economic damage, increased hunger, and poverty. The most important lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is the importance of working together on problems that affect the entire human race. “We are much stronger united than divided.”

# Appendices

## **APPENDIX A: CORONA AND POST COVID-19 CASES**

COVID-19 dispenses a challenge in the post-acute phase of reestablishment, due to the large numbers of individuals with new cardiovascular and pulmonary (CVP) and critical-illness-related impairments in a system not prepared to accept them. The COVID-19 caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus, has been unprecedented and unpredictable in many ways – from its infectious nature to the surprising impairments it causes. This is the third course in a three-part series that will provide an overview of COVID-19 pathophysiology, diagnostics, and medical management, along with comparisons of COVID-19 to post-intensive-care syndrome (PICS), considerations for examination and outcomes assessment; and presentation of representative post-acute COVID-19 patient cases across disease severity, with application of interventions. Ellen Hilligass and Angela Campbell presented three-part course includes Clinical Concepts for COVID-19:

- Pathophysiology and Related Impairments Assessment and
- Outcomes for COVID-19 in the Outpatient Setting.
- Case Studies on Post-COVID Recovery.

## **APPENDIX B: LEGAL LEADING CASE STUDIES**

In India, on February 19, 2020, the Department of Expenditure, Procurement Policy Division, Ministry of Finance issued an Office Memorandum, in relation to the government's 'Manual for Procurement of Goods, 2017', which serves as a direction for procurement by the government.

The Office Memorandum effectively states that “the COVID-19 outbreak could be covered by a force majeure clause on the basis that it is a ‘natural calamity’, caveating that ‘due procedure’ should be followed by any government department seeking to invoke it.”

However, COVID-19 is unlikely to give rise to a valid force majeure defense under every contract and in every circumstance, as different contracts and governing laws stipulate different requirements for different situations.

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