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COVID-19 and Mankind: The Chapter of Twenty-20

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Days prior to COVID-19 pandemic is going to be an ancient story book for each one of us. Human race couldn't anticipate such a blasting outbreak at all, and is now living each step of life with an unavoidable fear as well as passing sleepless nights. Several hashtags such as '**LOCKDOWN, UNLOCK, STAY HOME STAY SAFE, SOCIAL DISTANCING, QUARANTINE**' are buzzing 24 x 7. Today, home is office, video conferencing platforms are our meeting and class rooms, gadgets with internet are best friends, masks and hand sanitizers are our most precious and life-saving partners. The world corona-meter is accelerating faster than any other meter of the globe. Millions of families are unfairly affected and many more millions are yet to be affected. Each and every global system (economic, political, social, education etc.) were shaken by a 200 nanometre particle (corona virus). Current pandemic not only brought crisis in terms of public health but also is going to increase unemployment, food and nutrient insecurity, loss of livelihood, disturbance in education and agriculture system along with economic recession. The most notable tragedy is that we are not sure of

its ultimate end. We are smart enough to blame a bat or a pangolin for this catastrophic pandemic but fails to condemn our exploitation, injustice and sufferings made to the nature and to our mother earth. This unpredicted pandemic has given a crucial signal to *Homo sapiens* to register the cogency of nature or supremacy of almighty. Every sunset brings new sunrise, therefore it is hypothesized that human being will realise its fault and there will be a fresh start with new opportunities and growth.

COVID-19 and Corona Virus:

The novel coronavirus disease is designated as COVID-19, which has come from **Corona Virus Disease** and 19 was derived for its first case detected in 2019 in Wuhan city of China. In March, 2020 WHO declared the outbreak of COVID-19 as a global pandemic. The causative agent of COVID-19 is severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) belonging to the family *Coronaviridae* and genus *Betacoronavirus*. It is an enveloped, positive-sense, single-stranded RNA viruses with 29.9 Kb genome, ranging its size from 80 nm to 200 nm in diameter. Although majority

of cases are asymptomatic but most common symptoms are fever, dry cough and difficulty in breathing (striking symptom) and it primarily infects the respiratory system. About 80% cases recover spontaneously but critical cases require intensive care and mortalities are more frequently observed in old age patients or those with comorbidity. It is transmitted from person to person through small droplets expelled by an infected person while speaking, sneezing or coughing. SARS-CoV-2 has spread to 213 countries and territories. Diagnosis is done by Real-time PCR but many immunological assays are also developed to detect SARS-CoV-2 infection. Still there is no definitive cure or line of treatment. Therefore, supportive and symptomatic treatments are provided to the patients. Lack of vaccine is another hindering factor in controlling COVID-19. The race to develop potent vaccine has started among scientific communities and various pharmaceuticals companies. Till now, the best way to avoid COVID-19 is by social distancing and living a hygienic life.

Impact of COVID-19 in socioeconomic status:

Many changes in human lifestyle are budding out in all dimensions as a consequence of the COVID pandemic. People have started learning how to live a hygienic and healthy life. Culture of wearing masks in public places and frequent washing of hands will not only help us to fight COVID-19 but also it will prevent the spread of other infectious and communicable diseases. Shaking hands is not

the only way of greeting someone; instead one can go for a wave or bow, and most interestingly, the world learnt about *Namaste* from Indian culture. The concept of work from home has taught the genuine and efficient use of digital life; in fact, it is expected to revolutionize the system of work culture across the planet in the near future. Certain educated uncivilized section pursued discipline of making queue while shopping or in other such activities. There are families with very busy members, as if the burden of the universe is on them and they hardly meet each other, but corona brought them together under the same roof giving a chance to dine together. On the other hand, many, who are miles away from their home to earn livelihood, have finally come back to see their loving ones either on foot or by other means. During the journey towards home, many of them have sacrificed their life also. Although, COVID-19 has featured many positive changes, at the same time shadow of unhappiness has fallen on us. Today, we are scared of being victimised by COVID-19 and most of us are living a stressful, sorrowful and unsocial life. Prior to this outbreak we welcome our guest with a good gesture but today we avoid them with nervousness. Our attitude of interaction is changing in negative direction due to social distancing. The arena of amusement in day-to-day life has been narrowed down and a break is being given to travelling, unnecessary shopping, weekend celebration, festive vibes etc. It has also reduced the mental peace; thereby alterations in psychological behaviour are encountered. Mental status can be restored,

if we adopt physical distancing rather than social distancing.

COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the global economy into a state of coma. Government of the affected countries were compelled to put their respective countries in lockdown resulting in sudden drop in economy. The worst affected are small scale industrialists, entrepreneurs and businessmen because neither they are properly eligible for obtaining certain grants or reliefs through government schemes, nor they are self-sustainable for longer period of lockdown. Even, many small businesses are completely jeopardised by this lockdown. There is also cold trade war at international level and a smell of conspiracy in international trading system can be sensed. In the first quarter of 2020, most of the developed countries' GDP have been downregulated significantly. India's GDP is in reverse gear, perhaps the lowest of this decade. Due to temporary suspension of companies and industries, the rate of unemployment has given a quantum jump. U-turn or reverse migration of people employed in developed foreign countries may further deteriorate the unemployment condition in developing and underdeveloped countries. The rate of unemployment in India has increased abruptly after March, 2020. Even though Indian government has announced a huge economic package for economically weaker section, its impact will be reflected in due course of time.

Impact of COVID-19 on education system:

Educational institutions are still in lockdown in many countries and the date of unlocking is yet to be ascertained. This pandemic has tremendously disturbed the current education system. Students are running out of time and formal education, which will be difficult to compensate in future with the same spirit as earlier. Platforms such as Zoom Meeting, Google Class Room, GoToMeeting and many others are acting as virtual classrooms. Although these virtual classrooms are giving immense support to advance the education process in such adverse situation, still it suffers from many limitations. Students from families that can hardly effort their livelihood may be deprived from such online education system as it is fully dependent on high speed internet connectivity along with costly sophisticated gadgets. Effectiveness of online classes will be enhanced, only if, the issue of practical class is addressed. Moreover, government should formulate policies so that students from primary school to university get equal opportunity to avail such education system. However, many educationists appeal to make distance learning system (Open Universities) more effective so that such pandemic or other related situation can be tackled in a better way.

Impact of COVID-19 on agriculture and environment:

An alteration in agriculture system is a pre-requisite to combat the upcoming food security and livelihood. A change in food and supply system is predicted by FAO. There may be restrictions and shift in regulations in import and export of food items. Therefore, it is

imperative to recast the present agriculture system and initiatives are needed to increase the production of deficit food items in respective countries. Indian farmers faced great difficulties in selling their agricultural products due to lockdown. Moreover, the lack of adequate cold storage system has further aggravated the condition. Agriculture start-ups by educated young generation are to be encouraged as well as subsidy schemes should be implemented immediately by government for all categories of farming.

COVID-19 has prescribed a life-saving medicine to heal the nature. The most positive impact of COVID-19 was reduction in air, water and sound pollution. The greenery is increasing, air is getting clear, and wild fauna are moving fearlessly. Lower human activity has made progress in the mechanism of combating climate change. In a recent investigation, it was statistically observed that there is significant negative correlation between environmental temperature and growth of COVID-19 cases. However, the scenario in India might be different due to several other factors. Once again, magnificence of nature has been proven as it can modulate us whenever there is necessary to make a balance but the same cannot be vice-verse.

Some of key questions forwarded by COVID-19:

1. Whether *Homo sapiens* are still going to exploit the nature in post-COVID era?

2. Are we still hungry for better opportunities abroad?
3. Did we learn to live a hygienic and healthy life?
4. Could we realise about food and nutritional insecurity?
5. Did we perceive that health workers and biological scientists are also genuine warriors who fight against invisible enemies, perhaps the most dangerous enemies?
6. What will be the differences between pre and post-COVID era?
7. Whether there should be a curve in education, agriculture, and work culture etc. to a newer direction?
8. Whether social distancing and lockdown were successful in controlling COVID-19 pandemic?
9. What kind of preparedness is needed for similar pandemic in future?

Conclusion:

COVID-19 is the most destructive pandemic witnessed by the world after 100 years of Spanish flu. It has indoctrinated a tough lesson to human race; therefore, it will be interesting to note the impact of COVID-19 in due course of post-COVID era. It has also taught us to undermine and disobey caste, community, colour, religion, race or economic status discrimination. Today, we realized that education and employment in developed countries are not our sole priorities. The dynamic behaviour of novel corona virus is yet to be exploited properly making it difficult to develop a potent vaccine in short period of

time. Until we get the first injection of novel corona vaccine or spontaneous development of herd immunity, it is better to comprehend how

to live with COVID-19 safely and boldly. The post-COVID life is going to be strenuous and challenging in coming days.

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