



Covid-19 and Transculturalism: An Analysis

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Abstract

Outbreak of Covid- 19 put the whole globe in serious danger. It spreads more quickly than fire and no one can escape from its attack, if behaves carelessly. The rising scale of infected people unnerves every one and the authorities issue guidelines time and again to have a check on this pandemic. To remain in own nest without moving anywhere is the best way to keep away this fatal virus. It is significant to notice that on one side virus forced to adopt social distancing, on the other side transculturalistic attitude of people waging war to demolish it. Literature has been source of guide and motivation since ages. it inculcate spirit of humanity and brotherhood. The attitude of transculturalism contributes a lot in the time of catastrophe. Transculturalism is the approach which keeps people away from the narrow walls of class, caste and religion. People from all strata are doing their best to help others in this time of crisis. Corona- warriors play a very significant role to mitigate the panic of the people. It stimulates the humane side of the people around the world and many positive things also happen. In this paper, I endeavour to trace the effect of Covid-19 on society and social associations. Further, I will attempt to study how transculturalism occurs as a binding force during this pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19, Social distancing, Transculturalism, Binding force.

Today, no one is unaware about Covid- 19. Covid-19 is an abbreviated form of 'Corona- Virus Disease 2019. Corona is such a bad dream that is not going to end, still terrifying the world and raging its havoc all around the globe. Though the origin of the virus is still unknown, yet it is believed that it started from Wuhan, sea food market in December 2019, a city in China and has taken the whole earth in its grip. While answering about Corona virus, WHO states, "Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases..." (Web). On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organisation declared

Covid-19 outbreak "a global health emergency" as well as "a global pandemic" (Web) on March 11, 2020. Talking in simple words, Corona virus is a family of viruses related to RNA viruses causing some deadly disease in birds and mammals. On 30 January 2020, India confirmed first corona virus infected person in Kerala. The second wave of Covid 19 adversely affected not only India but the whole world. Besides a large scale of loss of lives, it crippled the world economically. The world endeavoured to defeat the deadly virus through a number of Corona Vaccines but it still continue to haunt the world in one form or the other. Data of Corona cases is eye opening which reminds everyone to be very precautions. According to WHO official website, on

27 June 2022, the total number of confirmed cases is 549,079,161 total 6,351,095 deaths are confirmed, 524,145,281 have recovered so far and 230 countries are under its hold. If particularly data of India is to be considered then till 27 July, 2022, there are 43,407,046 total cases and this disease have swallowed 525,020 people till now, 30,566,088 people are recovered from its clutches. At present time, continuous surge in number of infected person is matter of concern as it reached 94,420. India is now, the second largest country with 1,406,865,766 corona affected people.

The pandemic is not only health crisis but creating havoc on socio economic structure of the world. It has potential to devastate social, economical and political aspects of the country. The life has come to standstill. Everyone is aware that due to lockdown, all the manufacture factories had to suspend their work. The wheel of progress was halted. The pandemic had left numbers of factories locked and millions of people jobless. During lockdown, 14 crore people have to lose their job in India. Economy rate of every country is wavering. The growth rate of India is decreasing at a very fast rate. On 26 May, 2020, CRISIL stated that this time India will face the worst recession after Independence. The scale of Unemployment increased from 6.7% to 26%. During first 21 days lockdown, India's economy is reported to lose over 32,000 crore every day. The post covid predictions are more horrifying as World Bank predicts 20% global remittances in 2020 as a result of Covid-19 and shutdown. Further it states, "Remittance flows are expected to fall across all World Bank Group regions, most notably in Europe and Central Asia (27.5%), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (23.1%), the Middle East and North Africa (19.6%), Latin America and the Caribbean (19.3%), and East Asia and the Pacific (13%)" (Web). The nations and states which are totally dependent on tourism are helpless with their empty hotels and beaches deserted. Due to lockdown, people are caged in their house, as a result of which there is no scope of social gathering and dialogue exchange. The experiences of the migrant labourers who were depend on daily wages, are heart rendering.

In this helpless world of corona, approach of transculturalism appears as a hope to fight against the pandemic. What does this 'transculturalism' mean? Here, trans is a prefix which comes from Latin, means going over or beyond. Culture is collected human behaviour of particular person or a group which are acquired throughout the ages. 'Transculturalism' is fostering different cultural identities within the borders of multi-ethnic states. The basic premise of this idea is that individuals transcend their initial culture in order to examine, explore and infiltrate alien cultures. It was the original word of Fernando Ortiz, Cuban essayist and anthropologist who defined transculturalism in 1940 while talking about tobacco and sugar cultures in his book *Cuban Counterpoint*, as

synthesis of two phases occurring simultaneously, one being a de-culturalization of the past with a métissage with the present. This new reinventing of the new common culture is therefore based on the meeting and the intermingling of the different peoples and cultures. In other words, one's identity is not strictly one dimensional (the self) but is now defined and more importantly recognized in rapport with the other. In other words, one's identity is not singular but multiple (Ortiz qtd. in Cuccioletta, 8).

It is truly said that united we stand and divided we fall. The pandemic has highlighted the interconnectedness of different nation and it proved that one's safety lies in the safety of others. United Nations Development Programme on his home page "COVID-19 pandemic urges as "Humanity needs leadership and solidarity to defeat the corona virus" (Web). All the countries strive hard collaboratively to combat this fatal disease. No country is self sufficient in matter of medicines, masks, sanitizers, PPTs and other essential requirements to control this. For this purpose, UNO suggests the world to face the calamity with courage and support. Every country is helping the other as much as it can without any prejudice. Someone is proving medicines, someone infrastructure while someone is giving economical aid to the needy. This is transculturalism as according to Welch's model of transculturality all the established conventional boundaries of centre versus periphery, national versus culture, strong

versus weak collapsed down in favour of a pluralistic society.

Since ages, India has always been an ambassador of transculturality. The principle of unconditional brotherhood resonates in Indian ancient scriptures and Indian foreign policy since antiquity. The idea of entire world is like a family, appears in 6th chapter of *Maha Upanishad* as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.' Hitopadesh echoes the same idea in a sholaka as: "ayam nijah parovati ganana laghu – chetasam, udara charitanam tu vasuhaiva kutumbhakam" (Web). It means this is my own and that a stranger is the circulation of the narrow- minded, for the magnanimous-hearts however, the entire earth is but a family. India always helps disaster stricken countries whenever needed. It did not leave its generosity in the time of great pandemic though grappling with grim condition. Being a true friend, under neighbourhood policy, India is shipping drugs, life saving antibiotics and equipments for hospitals and laboratories. It is proving anti-malaria drugs to 55 countries which are severely hit by corona virus. Ambassador of US shows gratitude for India's noble gesture as, "Dear Ambassador! My Country the Dominican Republic is so grateful for this help in challenging times!!!" (ndtv.com). Rapid Response Teams are also sent to countries of gulf regions including Maldives.

All the infrastructures and other aids are of no use if there is no one to execute the plan on ground basis. As the disease is infectious, so danger lurks everywhere and the person who serves the patient, he/she can be infected. In such grim situation of "to be or not be", the people who are doing selfless services are warriors in true sense. Millions of doctors, nurses, police men, sanitize workers are in the field to rescue the planet from global health threat. The Supreme Court has termed these frontline workers as 'Covid-19 Warriors.'

Doctors and nurses are doing commendable job at the risk of their own life and family. While praising the dedication of these warriors, Amit Shah, Union Home Minister tweeted, "India salutes its heroic corona warriors. I assure you that the Modi Government and the entire country stand beside you. We have to free the nation from corona virus by turning challenges into opportunities and set an example for the world by creating a healthy, prosperous and strong India. Jai Hind" (*The Economics Times*).

With the increase of corona spread, the number of helpers also increased. Apart from government servants, many organisations, NGOs, social workers jumped into the fray and worked for the relief of common man. Railway coaches were turned into isolation wards. Many shelter homes were made by the government and organisations to provide home for migrant labours and other needy people. Basic requirements of all the sufferers were taken care of. Police men performed multiple roles by supplying rations and medicines, postmen helped in delivering cash and essential goods. Many girls and women voluntarily stitched masks and distributed in the slum areas and to other poor people. Likewise sanitizers, medicines, clothes, ration and other essential products were distributed among the needy. Many donors come forward to donate their money in the time of calamity. Every one contributed as much one's can to combat against the virus. Media played its role in spreading awareness among mass. A large number of corona warriors scarified their own life to save others. Many unsung heroes are serving the society in this crucial time. As per Indian government record, total 15896093 organisations are working to repair havoc of the virus. The list of corona warriors, till 12 July 2020 includes:

Designation	Number	Designation	Number	Designation	Number	Designation	Number
MBBS Doctors	1014537	Pharmacists	1200814	Railway Hospitals	86	Ex-Sevice men	12524
MBBS Students	104000	AYUSH	806367	Ordnance and Hal Hospitals	13	NYKS	3554912

Nurses	2618077	CPSEs Hospitals	201	Port Hospitals	12	NSS	25744693
Dentists	222816	ESIC Hospitals	51	LAB volunteers	43736	NCC	22124
PMKVY	142817	Psycho Social Care	116346	Gram Rozgaar Sewak	172959	Veterinary Doctors	70873
THW	30652	Panchayat S.	237859	Asha	1007045	Anganwadi	2543113
TW	43944	Allied &H.P	5813	Postman & Dak Sewak Delivery Agents	271082	Civil Defence	457044
Home Guards	441616	Fire Services	49972	NGOs	uncountable	Allied and Healthcare Professionals	1141467

(covidwarriors.gov.in)

The above table manifests that a large force is at forefront to ensure safety of mankind. It is important to note that designations of all warriors are provided by the government not their class or caste. These people are above class, caste, colour, creed and religion. Though the pandemic threat is sweeping across the globe beyond oceans and borders, all the organisations are helping the needy without considering their caste, class or religion. Their main purpose is to save humanity from this tough time. Edmund Burke’s quote, “Next to love, Sympathy is the divinest passion of the human heart” (web) seems quite apt now.

When the nature is playing dice with the world, literature has also played its role to promote positivity among the panic-stricken world. Re-telecast of Ramayana and Mahabharata inculcate hope in the Indians and taught to be brave and patient in tough time. Shakespeare also once asserted, “the miserable hath no other medicine but only hope” (Web). During lock down period, people moved towards books which gave message of hope. Pandemic literature of past like *The Decameron*, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, *Puratan Bharitya* etc make the people understand that pandemics have been mass murders and bring devastation through plague, cholera, smallpox, pestilence and influenza. These works of great plague, Black Death, pestilence

also tells the tale of triumph and ensures that humanity survives through every pandemic, this will happen this time also. Literature helps not only to grapple with fear but cling to hope. It stirs the inner strength of the people and restore faith. Hope is further transformed in form of goodness and teamed up to bring a new dawn. The ordinary men come forward, though not carrying out herculean task but performing their simple duty. The biggest strength of mankind lies in unwavering unity. Corona pandemic is a great danger to the existence of mankind. This war between man and invisible enemy can be won through united efforts of mankind. Without any resent, without any discrimination, all nations and all the people of universe are working for the same cause- to save planet, this is the victory of transculturalism and these efforts will not go worthwhile as, “If winter comes, can spring be far behind” (Shelley).

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