



COVID 19 and a Different World

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Dear Friends

Hope you are staying safe and keeping healthy!

COVID 19 has made world a very different place to live in. Due to its scope, magnitude and deep impact, COVID 19 will be the main theme of research in the times to come, especially in the post pandemic period when people settle down back into their daily routine. At present there are all over the world 9,472,473 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and unfortunately 484,236 people have died according to the World Health Organisation. However in the context of India I wish to flag some issues of sociological concern.

It is interesting to note that although pandemic has created common grief, suffering and economic devastation, it has somewhat acted as a leveller – it has impacted rich and poor. The pandemic has impacted India in a multi dimensional way. There appears to have been a *class wise suffering*. To begin with, economies all over the world have suffered but India's labourers went through a different kind of a suffering. Apart from being jobless, they also became homeless and starved. Help, in the form of temporary shelter and food came mostly from a combined effort of NGOs, Gurudwaras and State government. After the funds and patience dried up, the migrants workers undertook journey back home (in the absence of trains and buses), which proved to be an extraordinary ordeal for the workers. Several workers travelled by foot to their villages, most with children and no food or water. Some even died a brutal death. However most have returned to the villages and don't plan to return to the city for a while.

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Second impact of COVID 19 on India has been that it has exposed/created a *digital divide*. The field of education in India is already quite diverse and unequal. Closure of schools, colleges and universities in the country have resulted in enforced online teaching. Students of all ages at home are dependent on the financial condition of their family in order to pursue online education. In the rural parts of India things are even grimmer. There are powercuts and unavailability of sufficient internet data/load in the rural India. This is a major challenge to be able to log on for the class. Other social deterrents include – divergence at home from study time to work time. Record of students/teachers experiences will reveal important pointers for the policy makers in the coming times. Inability of the students to join the classes has even created huge stress for some students. We have several cases of student suicides so far. We need to work on this and avert such situations.

Pandemic has also exposed the unpreparedness of the health systems all over the world, not just India. Take away for India is that we will need to increase the investment in health infrastructure and hospitals.

Sociologically – in the domestic domain – it has created a *gender divide*. A few younger couples in the urban areas do share domestic responsibilities such as house work, grocery shopping and cooking. In most of the households, in the absence of maids, women/girls have been overburdened with house work as men/boys are left free to entertain themselves. Researchers will have to look into this sharpening of the domestic divide during pandemic.

I am sure in your own respective field of career or study you can look for more insights into the pandemic impact. We can prevent growth of mental health problems by taking stress and pressure off our structures such as education, work and daily life.

Wish you all the best

Dr Jyoti Atwal