

CORONA PANDEMIC: A MORAL LESSON**INTRODUCTION**

On 12th December, 2019, a patient with peculiar pneumonia was reported in a Hospital of Wuhan, a city in China of over one crore population. The Chinese Government then, on 31st December, 2019 cautioned the World Health Organisation (WHO) of a cluster of similar outbreak, amongst which, several of the patients were workers of a local seafood market. By 31st January, the virus named as novel coronavirus-2019 had rapidly spread far and wide to several countries, namely, India, Sweden, United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Phillipines, Spain, Russia, UAE, Vietnam, Canada, USA and Germany. Since the first report, it has been a global murky journey towards cure, prevention and management with over 52.8 millions of confirmed cases and death toll of over 1.29 millions. Although, it is difficult to predict the long term impacts of the virus, there are some early lessons we could learn from. Jared Diamond in his book Guns, Germs and Steel wrote that during an epidemic, "many tragic and cruel phases of human nature are brought out, as well as many brave and unselfish ones". An epidemic such as this puts an enormous pressure on the community it has attacked. In order to discharge some pressure and discomfort, the society reveals its true values and biasness. A epidemic becomes not only a health crisis but a moral crisis. In every epidemic, a particular community or a group of communities is always blamed for its spread which, if the disease perpetuates, leads to racial discrimination.

Viral footages on abusive confrontations of people around the world to individuals resembling Asian physical features (assumed as Chinese) affirm the deep-seeded racism and ignorance. Some even choose to disbelief the phenomenon by simply referring to it as a hoax and disobeying public health guidelines. A previous friendly neighbor turns hostile, shuts the door, when you pass through the corridor, merely because of your travel history. A landlord expels you from the apartment because of your health care profession. Perhaps, a lesson on empathy and common sense? Another profound warning the virus imposes is on demographic changes. But in this gloom and doom scene, one also notices the efforts of the unsung heroes. Older generations are particularly, more susceptible to the virus in comparison to other past epidemics where all age groups were at risks equally. Millennials, have in several occasions held older generations accountable for environmental degradation and climate change. This time, the tables have turned, and it beckons the younger generation to act responsibly by staying at home and acquire extra precaution for the survival of elders.

LESSON

We need our government. An utter resentment towards the government has been the winning cry for a long time. Even though we vote and substantial number of us involve ourselves in political campaigns, debates and discussions, but the topics on 'politics' or 'government' are often declared as repugnant. The seats, however, have changed. We now sit on anxious seats and look to our government for a ray of hope, to save us from the pandemic as well as a sinking economy. We depend on our government to lead us the way. Therefore, there is a great need, on the citizen's part, to comprehend the importance of conversation as well as discourse in politics and offset our prejudices. On another hand, the colossal political outcome of the virus could also possibly overthrow an existing trembling government. Great revolutions around the world had occurred because the government had failed its own people and a strong one emerged. Governments must be compared to one another on the basis of crisis management performances inside the coronavirus arenas.

The cliché on following your passion makes even more sense now. A growing number of population view profession as a gateway to social prestige and power. The current pandemic calls us deep on our courage to the fact that a job may not be a mere livelihood means or staircase of fame. We need to remind ourselves that our jobs are noble vocation to which, if another catastrophe of any kind should ever occur, we must prepare to pledge our allegiance and services. In addition, extra efforts from the government must be emphasised to encourage more schemes and funds for the all aspirants, irrespective of their incomes, so that anyone could participate in health care and elite services. This would aid to proportionate the professional-customer ratio such as our disproportionate doctor-patients. Both efforts will improve quality and quantity of the service sector and ease up such untoward situations. We will have our dedicated warriors and also trust on our experts will be renewed.

Another lesson to be learned for the government is the perils of stretched positivity and ignorance. In the USA, citizens were told to be calm and positive till the point that it led to highest number of deaths.

This, however, is not in any way, to dissuade the notion of optimism or persuade panic in the nation for meagre issues but rather to just learn to draw a line between real threats and positivity. Clear and direct communication must be held with the masses about an alarming circumstance. In the end, it boils down to the government's ability to persuade its people to cooperate in challenging times. Another difficult decision for the Government to make is the choice between economy of the state or the public health. The virus is actually exposing the global economic vulnerabilities. It is not breaking the system but exposing a broken one. At the end of the day we need a plate of food in our table for ourselves and our families and all else are secondary. It is rather a lesson that besides the health sector, agriculture sector must be highly promoted, especially in a country like India, where farmers are considered to be the poorest.

Coronavirus is both anti-globalisation and environment-friendly. Suddenly, on its account, we are made aware of the distinct physical state borders and a sense of patriotism towards our own land. People from outside our particular region are not allowed anymore to enter, and massive efforts are going on to bring back our own people. Before we even realize, we are globally advertising the famous tag line, "Think global, act local". It has also, evidently, compelled all of us to stay at home and use minimum resources. Major public transports are temporarily banned. We now understand that most of the office jobs can be done at home without exhausting a litre of petrol from our vehicles or styrofoams and foils used in our lunch packs. We are not allowed to take casual trips, dine out, or even go for an evening ride. The virus is effortlessly reducing our carbon footprints and restoring nature.

The rapid growth of the virus summons a collective effort to find scientific developments towards a vaccine. Countries and scientific communities acknowledge that it would be in best interest to make research findings accessible to all. By doing so, they have managed to generate full genome sequence and over 200 configurations of the virus in a short period of time. For researchers and common people, it also improves the understanding of the spread of the virus. The open-data availability aligns the scientific community to work together to unveil quick solution the rapid growth of the virus. It is a great lesson that sharing data and working openly is much more beneficial than isolated finding. Authoritarian countries like China and North Korea, needs to be more transparent in sharing information with the rest of the world.

In a world of performances, loud music and external validations, coronavirus is giving us an opportunity to most of us to stay indoors and reflect on life. To complete a book, play with children and learn new skills. The world just went from Dale Carnegie's How to win friends and influence people to Susan Cain's Quiet: The power of introversion in a world that cannot stop talking in a matter of days. What more, the virus is teaching us basic hygiene. An opportunity for us to pay attention to the essential things while taking a break from an ever-moving, rat-racing life.

To conclude, the world we are living now is more unprecedented than ever. We do not know the beginning yet, let alone the climax. One thing is quite baffling and humbling, though, that an exceedingly small semi-living organism could have the power to control the movement of a "superior" being. How fragile life is! And maybe, just maybe, we are not the superior beings as we would like to believe, there is something much more adaptive and ancient than us. Our hope should be not to provoke this being. We also need to remember that ultimately, co-evolution always wins. It is not Chinese versus the rest, it is not vegetarians versus non-vegetarians, and it is not us versus them. Co-evolution always wins.

About Author



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