

PCI Report Series

**Exploring the Socio- Economic
Impacts of COVID 19-
A Case of India**

Author- Ajay Gautam,

Co-Authors- Neha Yadav, Kriti Suri, Kritika Garg, Amisha Garg

No. 1001

May 2020



Ajay Gautam is Founder & President of Policy Change Initiative. Neha Yadav is Public Health Researcher at The Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health (CSMCH), Jawaharlal Nehru University & Associate Editor of a policy research journal “Governance and Policy critique. Kriti Suri, Kritika Garg, Amisha Garg are research interns at Policy Change Initiative.

The views expressed in this paper are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of PCI, its Board of Directors, or the governments they represent.

PCI does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this paper and accepts no responsibility for any consequences of their use. Terminology used may not necessarily be consistent with PCI official terms. Reports papers are always subject to formal revision and correction.

The PCI report series is part of usual written deliberation on important contemporary socio- economic issues. This report is prepared by reviewing umpteen primary and secondary resources around the world and compiles into the report form for educational purpose.

PCI’s reports reflect initial ideas on a topic and are posted online for discussion. Some working papers may develop into other forms of publication.

The purpose of PCI report is to comprehensively explore the multidimensional impacts of any socio-politico and economic issues around the world.

Suggested Citations:

Gautam, Ajay, Neha Yadav, Kriti Suri, Amisha Garg, and Kritika Garg. *Exploring the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID 19 : A Case of India*. PCI Report Series , New Delhi: Policy Change Initiative, 2020, 1-78.

Please contact the author for information about this report.

Email: ajay@pciindia.in

Tel: +91-9654480046

URL: www.pciindia.in

E-mail: info@pciindia.in

© 2020 **Policy Change Initiative**

ABSTRACT

In this report, we have tried to bring about umpteen issues with respect the changes brought up by coronavirus pandemic. This report is divided into three sections, Economic, Social and Environmental & Health impacts on Indian society. Section first primarily dealing with economic issue like Consequences for the Indian economy, the future of industry, role of RBI during lockdown, Digitization amidst lockdown, and finally which industries got benefitted from lockdown and which got impacted in much worse way. Section second is exploring the environmental and health issues like How this pandemic has forced government to build up a people centric health system, How pandemic has emerged as the blessing to the environment and finally the dynamic of heard immunity. Finally, the third sections is dealing with the social issues like, how this pandemic impacted different sections differently, for instances, domestic violence increase during lockdown, issue of migrant plight come to fore and other socio- psychological issues.

Key Words: Covid 19, Coronavirus and Lockdown

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
ECONOMIC IMPACTS	5
COVID 19: LOCKDOWN & THE INDIAN ECONOMY- PART 1	6
LOCKDOWN: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE INDIAN ECONOMY- PART 2	8
IS 'WORK FROM HOME' THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRY?	11
COVID 19: RBI DURING THE LOCKDOWN HOURS- PART 1.....	13
COVID 19: ROLE OF RBI DURING LOCKDOWN – PART 2.....	14
COVID 19: TOP FIVE SECTORS BENEFITED DURING LOCKDOWN	16
COVID 19: FIVE MOST AFFECTED SECTORS DUE TO LOCKDOWN	18
COVID 19 : AS A PROSPECT FOR INDIAN INDUSTRIES	20
COVID 19: MARKETING IN THE TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY	22
COVID-19: CHANGING DYNAMICS THE STOCK BEHAVIOUR	23
COVID-19: THE PLUMMETING CRUDE OIL PRICES, AN EFFECT	25
COVID 19: DIGITISATION IN INDIA AMIDST LOCKDOWN.....	26
HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS	29
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC OFFERS A CHANCE FOR INDIA TO BUILD UP A PEOPLE- CENTRIC HEALTH SYSTEM.....	30
COVID 19: HAS IT EMERGED AS A BLESSING TO THE ENVIRONMENT?	35
THE RISE OF ASYMPTOMATIC CASES, CAN THE THEORY OF HERD IMMUNITY BE PRACTICED?.....	37
SOCIAL IMPACTS	40
STRUGGLE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS AND DAILY WAGERS	41
RISING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	42
FORCE MAJEURE REVISITED	44
THE SHADOW PANDEMIC IN INDIA.....	46
COVID-19, LOCKDOWN AND UNITY	47
CITIZENS DURING THE LOCKDOWN	49
THE REAL 'MESSIAHS' DURING THIS CRISIS.....	54
LOCKDOWN: IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF THE DAILY WAGE EARNERS.....	58
COVID19 vs LOCKDOWN: WAS IT AN EFFECTIVE MEASURE FOR INDIA?	61
PANDEMIC IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY.....	64
SHOULD RECOVERY OF POOR SECTION BE TOP PRIORITY FOR INDIA?	66
REFERENCES.....	70

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

COVID 19: LOCKDOWN & THE INDIAN ECONOMY- PART 1

‘Coronavirus and Indian Economy’ is one of the most debated and talked about issues in India right now. COVID-19 has definitely impacted the Indian economy a lot and will keep affecting until it is completely rooted out. The lockdown imposed in the whole country has minimized the market activities which will impact the GDP negative. Popular global credit ratings firm Moody’s recently slashed India’s GDP growth rate during FY2020 to 2.5% from an earlier estimate of 5.3%. These estimates were released in March 2020. After that, the pandemic further severely affected the Indian economy, making the forecasts worse. Possibilities are that COVID-19 will bring a crisis in the Indian economy which will be difficult to recover from.

The Indian government had imposed a lockdown from 1st April,2020 till 15th April,2020 and it was then extended till 19th May,2020 with relaxations in some areas. In some states, it was ensured that the government will deliver the basic necessities to each and every house. The government has been constantly urging people to not panic, maintain calm and to not step outside their houses until necessary. As compared to other countries, India has taken the step of lockdown at a very early stage of the pandemic. This decision has definitely helped India in fighting Covid-19 but it has severely affected the economy. Therefore, as important as this step was for the Indian population, it is damaging to the economy. With the minimization of economic activities, the economy will soon suffer from a recession due to the lockdown.

Many economists and research institutions making predictions about the economic implications of Covid-19 for India. In her online session Prof. Jayati Ghosh on the topic ‘Covid-19 and its impact on Indian Economy’ which was organized by the Centre for Financial Accountability, asserted that the economy is going through a supply side problem and that measures taken by the government are not clear enough to resolve this issue. She insisted on no clear definition of necessities by the government and on the working channels of distribution during lockdown. According to her, an area specific lockdown rather than a generalized lockdown will work much better in fighting the virus as well as keeping up with the economy. She also focused on the problem of labor shortage which might prevail after the pandemic ends in India. The large reverse migration of the informal sector workers has put brought an onslaught of major difficulties for the system. Some solutions and additional measures she suggested for fighting coronavirus and saving the Indian economy from massive losses include making direct payments in the bank accounts of the poor in India and using IMF’S Special Drawing Rights (SDR’s).

On the other hand, Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan in one of his interviews to India Today said that the impact of Covid-19 on the Indian economy cannot be exactly ascertained at this point, since it depends on India's economic measures during and post the pandemic. It will be a recession if the economy gets back to its original growth within few months but it will turn into a huge depression like the one in 2008 if sufficient measures are not taken to revive the economy in the coming months. He was on the same page as Professor Ghosh regarding the measures to tackle the current situation by making targeted income transfers in India. China saw a 10% decline in its GDP growth during the quarter while battling Covid-19. Same growth rate decline can be expected in many other countries including India, seeing the adverse effects it has caused. Some measures he suggested for now include revamping the health structure in India and maintaining the supply chain in the country. He further added two most important factors to be taken care of, in the country right now- communication and data collection and its release. He insisted on communicating the urgency of the situation to the Indian citizens which will help India to contain the spread of the coronavirus to some extent. The collection and release of the data of the detected and cured cases in India is the other important factor. Data release will help the citizens to stay safe and to understand the problem at their level.

Similarly, many economists have varied views regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the Indian economy but the similarity which will come out of all the views is that the economy will suffer from a recession post this. The automobile sector was already seeing a decline in the demand and now Covid-19 has further added to its worries. There is almost nil demand of automobiles during the lockdown and less manufacturing of automobiles will further affect the Steel industry as well. CARE Ratings suggest that Automobile sector can see 15-16% decline in volume in FY20. In addition, real estate sector is also severely affected by the lockdown since almost all of the construction work in the country has stopped. Self-employed or casual workers comprises of nearly 75% of Indian population. They are the most affected part of the workforce of India since many of them work on daily wages and lockdown has almost stopped the source of income for them. In addition, there is a job drought and a high rate of unemployment in India which is expected to increase more in the coming months as an after-effect of lockdown. The government should thus ensure sufficient money and a supply of basic necessities in the hands of public to meet their demands. SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) can be given a leeway in green zones where Covid-19 hasn't spread much. This will thus ensure the running of the economy and will assist the government in

fighting the decline in the growth of the Economy. Reserve Bank of India can play their part in reviving the economy by ensuring sufficient fund lending by banks to SMEs to keep them working and ensuring the maintenance of a fiscal space.

The coronavirus will affect the economy of all the countries suffering from it and adequate measures are required from each part of the world to stop it from becoming a world crisis. The global financial crisis of 2008 was a demand crisis but this time, if not taken care of, Covid-19 will lead to a supply crisis throughout the world. Even now, developed countries like USA are suffering from lack of imports of medical facilities and medicines. Italy, even after having the 2nd best healthcare system of the world suffered from a huge loss of population due to Covid-19. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that this pandemic will lead to huge difficulties for each country affected by it and it will take time for each of it to revive from its after-effects. If sufficient measures will not be taken, India will also fall into the global crisis and the Indian Economy will be going from an all-time low. The economy of India might even suffer from a permanent supply shock thus leading to a crisis which will be difficult to come out from.

LOCKDOWN: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE INDIAN ECONOMY- PART 2

March 22, 2020 the day when entire country was put on a halt and join in hands together to fight the epidemic. It was the day when our Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi called for an entire lockdown for 21 days.

The epidemic, novel corona virus first laid its ground on the city of Wuhan, China on 31st December 2019. The spread of the virus was so quick that it has covered the entire world economy by now. Given the statistics by World Health Organisation, there have been 5 million cases confirmed with only 1.69 recovered patients (as on 20 May). While reading this article, who knows how many more cases would have been confirmed by now!

The epidemic called as the COVID 19 has put the entire world economy on pause. This pause has out-turned to be much worse than the global financial crisis of 2008, according to the IMF reports. It has been now declared as pandemic. The world has come to a standstill with the onslaught of this pandemic. It has successfully brought the mightiest of the countries to their knees economically and socially. It was an everyday fight for healthcare sectors to curb its extend but now it has become a battle of every citizen against the COVID 19. Even the countries like Italy have fallen prey to the spread of disease, India has not been less affected.

Taking the lessons from the other economies, India had called for a complete lockdown to control the epidemic.

India is a country of billions of people where people travel on a daily basis for work, mostly population residing in rural areas, large population with respiratory problems and still a public health care sector with severe deficiencies. The lockdown was seen as the first and crucial step for the spread of the coronavirus. But as everything comes with a price to be paid, the lockdown came here with the cost of huge decline in economic activities affecting almost each and every sector in the economy.

Firstly, how the lockdown will help curb the spread is quite evident. As stated in Economic Times, “India has taken such a big decision of lockdown which others have not done for a long, and they missed the appropriate time. Therefore, we believe that the size of our outbreak will be much smaller and manageable”. The lockdown helps break the chain of virus transmission and expects a reduction in the number of cases. With the lockdown extension coming into play, the lockdown has surely broken the chain of transmission to many people. As reported by the Ministry of Health, if lockdown would have not been there, India would have seen large number of people infected. Also, with not so adequate supply of equipment at that time, there would have been more graves than people living in the country.

Taking it to the economic affect, it has grasped the economic sectors from tourism, aviation etc. to daily wage earners. 70% of the country’s total economic activity was brought to a standstill. Only the essential services which include of agriculture, mining, public services and some IT services were allowed to operate. Perhaps by looking at the economic sectors, a prediction that India will not suffer much might be true but on the same hand people working as seasonal labourers, daily wage earners can be said as worst affected in this case. The first phase of lockdown caused the Indian economy a loss of ₹7 to ₹8 lakh crore. “The pandemic came at the most inopportune time for India whose economy was showing signs of recovery after bold fiscal/monetary measures, the country again stares at the possibility of low single-digit growth for FY2021 (April 2020 to March 2021)” Centrum Institutional Research said.

It has been estimated in the report of World Bank that India is only expected to grow at the rate of 1.5% to 2.8% in this fiscal year. India was first impacted when China called for a lockdown. The major effect was on imports, majorly electronic imports, of our country. It saw a decline in the sales of various electronic items for which raw material was imported from China. With respect to tourism industry, it has been said to be the worst crisis that has

ever occurred. The Indian travel industry starting from airlines to hotels to restaurants are seen to suffer a great loss of revenue. As the news started spreading at its peak, the number of cancellations for availing the services also showed a great hike. The Indian transport sector also including of internal transportation facilities also suffered a great loss. Private taxis, trucks, autos etc. have been greatly affected.

As per the secretary general of All India Motor Congress, Naveen Gupta, every truck used for transporting material to and fro from construction sites is suffering an average loss of ₹2,000 per day. Indian population, most of them are engaged in farming and with lockdown imposed, there was a pressure on the officials to look into sufficient staples for the entire country. The lockdown has been imposed at the most crucial time for the farming sector. It is the time when winter crop are harvested and sold, and the summer crops are sowed. It is important for the government to prioritise and find ways to make it work so ensure everybody has food to eat.

Another belief, maybe a rumour that took to the minds of people had been that it was caused by poultry and seafood. The result of this rumour was seen with a 30% decline in the sale of it. This is a big concern because India has been exporter of seafood to countries like US, European Union and China. This has affected the income of many people residing in those rural and coastal areas. According to the Ministry of Commerce, India being a major exporter of clothing to Europe has seen a 35% decline. The industry can be predicted to be more affected with malls closed and decline in footfalls at stores.

The bank credit rate which was earlier 14.5% has seen a decline to all time level of 6.1%. Investments have seen also seen a huge drop, because of which there has been a decline in job creations as well. With these effects, the unemployment rate has also gone up with lower incomes and lower consumption in the economy. This vicious circle can only be broken with reviving the investments in the country.

Although many government organisations like NITI Ayog, Economic Advisory Council and Finance Ministry have been told to assess the economic effect the pandemic is creating, the exact outcomes can only be assessed after a while. The mentioned sectors can be seen as only a drop in the ocean this pandemic has created. Still with a hope we can only wish, the situation should not worsen anymore. The government should start looking for the relief measures for the affected industries soon. What India will require to get back on track would

be a great planning by the officials for a comeback to being the fastest growing developing economy!

IS 'WORK FROM HOME' THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRY?

Coronavirus disease has spread throughout the world forcing many countries to shut down. Lockdown is imposed in many parts of the world and some companies are making their employees work from home to keep the organization and the economy running. The employees of many IT companies are working full time from home. Among the top companies, Google was one of the first to ask its employees throughout the world to work from home. As soon as World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic, many companies started laying out plans for their employees to work from home. Getting the white-collar employees to work from home was disregarded by most companies until now, but when the world started shutting down, companies were forced to do so. On the other hand, there are many companies which cannot afford remote working or for them, it is just not possible. Such companies majorly include the ones in automobile and real estate sector. In fact, for millions of employees working in hospitality, media and banking, working from home is just not an option. In the informal sector, millions of daily wage laborers and construction workers do not even have sufficient savings to feed themselves during lockdown, forget about the option of working from home then. But what we are talking about here is the question that is work from home going to be the future of the industry? Industry here includes the companies which can afford and have the capability to work from home. And how better or worse it is than the usual working in office?

Work from home is certainly possible in case of IT companies. Some companies like Infosys, Google, etc. provide working from home as an option to their employees in their HR policies. Among the top automobile companies in India, Tata Motors was the first to issue the order of working from home for some of its employees. Many firms followed the decision after that. The employees who have been working from home are mostly those with desk jobs since it is not possible for factory workers. Desk job employees can only work up to an extent since if the production stops, there will be no work to do and ultimately, decrease in production will lead to decline in that sector's growth. Covid-19 will affect the automobile sector and the real estate sector the most since their operations will be minimized during the lockdown. But it won't stop the IT sector from functioning.

Coming to IT companies, let us talk about the future of working from home. Like two sides of a coin, working from home also has two sides. For some employees, it is difficult to focus

on work while they are at home. Other disadvantages might include noises in the background during video calls, distractions by family members, etc. For companies, disadvantages of its employees working from home include less efficient communication, more meetings to make sure everyone is working and difficult administration. Looking up at the other side of the coin, work from home has a lot of advantages. There is an increase in productivity of employees since the lunch breaks and transportation time gets eliminated and it allows them to work for a greater number of hours without losing energy. Moreover, work from home offers an embracing experience for those who cannot commute to work due to some personal reasons. People can even work from remote locations comfortably. Another advantage of working from home is the decrease in usage of electricity, rent and other desirables of an office. Work from home by the employees reduces the costs incurred by the respective companies and leads to an increase in employees' productivity.

Now comes the question that work from home is going to be the future of the industry or not. The Covid-19 Crisis is helping to shine a light on both the pleasures and pressures of working from home. In Indian industry, there is a kind of hierarchy in companies with which it might be a little difficult to work from home. In short term, more white-collar work done remotely will save the lives of people in India. But in the long term, it depends on the capability of the companies and its employees to work from home. Remote working is much more efficient and effective than the usual working in office. It reduces costs as well as leads to increases in productivity. It might happen that after the lockdown, more companies will introduce work from home as an option for their employees. But again, the fact is that work from home is just not possible in some sectors. For the sectors where it is plausible, the business scenario will come to a change if the lockdown persists longer and employees get used to working at home. It will even yield more productivity and organizational gains and eventually, economic conditions will improve in those sectors. Thus, work from home is the future of the industry but not in entirety.

COVID 19: RBI DURING THE LOCKDOWN HOURS- PART 1

The spread of the pandemic resulting in prolonged periods of lockdown has been a difficult time for every individual, industries and firms. The government, doctors and police force has come up as frontline workers in this situation, our central bank, the Reserve Bank of India is not far behind. Reserve Bank of India popularly known as RBI has introduced new measures and revised its several rates to ease the economic consequences of this pandemic. It has introduced each and every measure keeping in mind that the revival of the economy should not be a cumbersome task after the restrictions are uplifted.

For banks, the first task that was undertaken was 'cheaper cash' implemented mainly with the aim to motivate banks to lend. It came into practice with the announcement that banks do not have to set aside cash for any kind of loans. The policy lending rate was dropped by 75 basis points so that lenders do not feel like depositing their cash with the RBI.

Moreover, keeping in mind the issues that this lockdown would create for the citizens, the cash reserve ratio i.e. the amount a citizen has to park with the bank came down to 3% from 4%. Shaktikanta Das, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, proposed what is known as 'loan freeze'. All the loan repayments were asked to be stopped and lenders can apply for repayments to be freeze up to three months on term loans.

With economies shut worldwide, exporters suffered huge losses. Reserve Bank of India came forward with a couple of measures to provide relief to the exporters. A period of nine months is usually given to the exporter to release and repatriate. However, during this crisis, the term has been extended up to fifteen months. This extension has not only gave the exporters time to get their receipts from the economies abroad but also time work out on the future contracts with them. "The move was in recognition that demand had been slow and realisation of remittances would likely take longer considering the impact of the spread of the coronavirus on the global economy and foreign trade. This will help exporters from a regulatory standpoint and can be used as a marketing tool" said Ajay Sahai, Director General and Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Indian Exports Organisation (Nahata, 2020).

Keeping in mind that the government will be looked upon every now and then to mind solutions to problems arising, RBI formed a special advisory committee which reviewed means and limits for short term credits to the governments by the central bank for the states and union territories. It was decided that there will be an increase in 30% from the existing limit.

The counter cyclical capital buffer, commonly known as CCyB, which the central bank introduced in 2015 aimed at keeping aside some capital which can be used to protect the banking sector from losses during the difficult times. The buffer was thought to be bought to practice but with the instructions of the central bank, it will only be initiated as and when the situation arises.

The government along with the help of the central bank has also looked upon strengthening the WMA which is the ways and means of advance, a temporary aid that can be given for meeting the mismatches in the revenue of the state governments.

The committee released its report saying that, “It has been decided to increase WMA limit by 30 percent from the existing limit for all States/UTs to enable the State Governments to tide over the situation arising from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.” (The Economic Times, 2020b). NBFCs (Non-Banking Financial Companies) have praised the efforts undertaken by the central bank as they will surely help out the companies facing the liquidity challenges. Since majority of the lenders from NBFCs include people who are not inclined to daily incomes, targeting long term refinancing options of ₹50,000 has been directed towards them.

During this pandemic the Reserve Bank of India has surely made into to the frontline in order to tackle and refraining economy from experiencing a major decline. The efforts taken by the central bank has surely been commendable. With the predictions done for Indian economic growth of 1.5-2.8% by world bank and 0% by Barclays, the wait is now only for the release of the stimulus package by the government officials save the economy

COVID 19: ROLE OF RBI DURING LOCKDOWN – PART 2

The economy is suffering on a global level with a major number of countries being affected due to COVID-19. Central banks including the Fed, Bank of England, RBI and many others certainly need to take very crucial steps towards combatting the situation. Many businesses are suffering due to lack of funding and lack of liquid assets. The credit and debt situations will worsen as the lockdown continues. Being dependent on liquidity and rate reductions cannot solely be a solution towards reaching credit that is affordable by all. There is no doubt about the fact that central banks have enough power to mitigate financial risks facing their country without worrying about the balance sheet.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced several measures to handle the economic slowdown generated due to the lockdown. It reduced the Repo Rate by 75 basis points (bps)

to 4.4 per cent and Reverse Repo Rate 90 bps to 4 per cent. Repo rate is the rate at which RBI lends to the commercial banks of the country and the Reverse Repo Rate is the one at which RBI borrows from them. Other measures have also been taken by the RBI. More liquidity infusion was provided in the banking system adding up to Rs. 6.5 trillion in the coronavirus period. The Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) was also cut from 4 per cent to 3 per cent of the deposit base. An excess liquidity of Rs. 1 trillion was provided to the commercial banks for investments in corporate bonds and commercial papers.

Other central banks also took several measures towards controlling the situation. The Federal Reserve System, USA reduced the interest rates twice since the pandemic. Reserve Bank of New Zealand slashed interest rates to a record low. Reserve Bank of Australia increased liquidity by \$ 3.6 billion. The RBI in India also imposed a moratorium on principle and interest payments ordering banks and other financial institutions that non-payment shall not be considered as non-performing assets (NPA). But this rule comes with a cost. For anyone who opts to postpone the EMI payments for two months, the banks will charge an interest on the unpaid amount, that could even lead to extension of the loan by 6 to 10 months or an increase in the EMI amount by 1.5 per cent.

India's economic recovery will suffer and take different turns amidst COVID-19. The central bank projected the real growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at 5 per cent for the financial year 2019-20 and a growth of 5.5 per cent for the current year. The inflation has relaxed in March in comparison to February. The retail inflation reached 5.91 per cent from 6.48 per cent in February. For the first time since November 2019, the retail inflation rate based on Consumer price Index (CPI) fell below 6 per cent, which is the target upper band as set by the Reserve Bank of India Monetary Policy Committee. Although the effect of the current situation on inflation is ambiguous, there is an expected food price decline due to the paused production of non-food products leading to supply disruptions.

The growth of the Indian economy looks grim at the moment with the RBI projecting India to go into recession in 2020 due to disruption in global supply chains. Trading and travel are two major parts of the global economy and the current situations have affected them on a large scale. Exports from China is expected to witness a huge shift in consumers. This opens newer opportunities of trade for India. The central banks have made some post COVID-19 projections on the lines of the prices with the financial markets and global market prices

experiencing severe volatility. The major global price disruption as of now is the fall in the prices of crude oil.

In these difficult times the economy is going to suffer, and it gets difficult to precisely predict the repercussions. The central banks along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will be required to take the necessary steps to manage the credits and individual finances as combatting the virus has used up a major chunk of the finances available to the countries. Some have even resorted to taking up more credit from the IMF including India.

COVID 19: TOP FIVE SECTORS BENEFITED DURING LOCKDOWN

While the economy of most of the countries is suffering a downturn and many sectors are going through a major setback, there are still some sectors which are the benefiteres from the lockdown imposed due to coronavirus. These sectors are showing consistent growth with reference to growth of stocks of some particular companies of these sectors. All of them are on online platforms. Let us have a look at these sectors:

E-commerce sector-

When unnecessary movement of people is restricted and people are in dire need of basic necessities of life including food, etc, they are changing their ways to e-commerce platforms. With the usage of e-commerce platforms, they are avoiding unnecessary movement and also getting the goods delivered at the comfort of their homes. E-commerce companies like Amazon have started contactless delivery to ensure safety to their customers. The E-commerce sector also includes companies like Paytm, Netmeds, etc. E-commerce finance companies such as Paytm, MobiKwik, Google Pay, etc. are seeing a surge in their growth due to people opting for digital payments to avoid cash payments since they require physical contact. E-commerce companies of the medical and healthcare sector like Netmeds, PharmEasy, etc are also seeing a surge in growth even though pharmacies in the country are not closed. This is because people are avoiding physical movement outside their houses as much as possible. All of this is leading to a growth of all companies operating in the e-commerce Sector. In the future, it is quite possible that people get used to this platform might slowly wipe out the existence of retail shops in some sectors.

Pharmaceuticals / Sanitary products-

Pharmaceutical companies are playing a major role in the pandemic. With lockdown imposed in the whole country, medical and pharma products are one of the necessities of life. India being one of the leading exporters of generic drugs all over the world has many chances of pushing growth in the pharmaceutical sector during and post COVID-19. Recently, India exported the 'Hydroxychloroquine' drug to the U.S. amid the coronavirus crisis. India manufactures nearly 70% supply of this drug which is being seen as a possible cure for coronavirus disease by some countries of the world despite the lack of clear evidence in this regard. Now the matter of fact is that the pharmaceutical companies are not going through a low phase since the medical and healthcare sector is one sector which cannot stop working whatever happens. In addition to the pharma products involving generic drugs for various diseases, sanitary products are also seeing a surge in demand. The demand for soaps, sanitisers, masks, etc are at an all time high.

Entertainment / Mass Media / Mobile fitness apps- Most of the people in the world are locked in their houses and some of them have ample time during the lockdown. People are thus spending their time watching movies, web series, shows, etc. Online media platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney plus Hotstar, etc have reported an increase in their viewership since the lockdown. Gaming and online music platforms have also reported more usage since the lockdown. People are spending more time in front of screens. With the gyms and parks closed, people are trying new fitness applications to keep themselves fit at home. Social media applications are also reporting increase in their use by people all over the world.

Video Conferencing Platforms-

With nearly all of the industries closed due to the lockdown, many companies have begun with the 'Work from home' option for their employees. Working professionals all over the world are working from the comfort of their homes and all the meetings in this regard are taking place on online video conferencing applications. There is a global surge in demand for video conferencing

applications and websites. Zoom being one of the most widely used platforms of all saw a spike of 200 million users in March from just 10 million users in December. Other video conferencing platforms like GoogleDuo, Cisco Webex, etc have also reported a huge increase in their consumer base since the lockdown. It is not just working professionals who are using these applications, it is also the common people who are using these apps for virtual meetups and happy hours. The competition among the companies operating in the video conferencing market is increasing day by day.

Online education platforms

There is no means for the students who are under lockdown to go to schools and colleges to study or for the teachers and professors to teach. Thus, online education platforms are widely being used all over the world to not put an halt on the teaching-learning process. Teachers are using online platforms like Google Classrooms to record the databases and giving assignments to students and lectures are taking place through online media platforms. Apart from this, students are using their free time to upgrade their skills and are enrolling for online courses on data science, language, tech, AI, etc. The time during quarantine is being widely regarded as a skill upgradation time by many people.

COVID 19: FIVE MOST AFFECTED SECTORS DUE TO LOCKDOWN

Lockdown imposed due to Coronavirus Pandemic has affected the economy of India at major levels. But there are some sectors which are the most affected by it. Most of these sectors are those which primarily involve physical work of the employees. The sectors are:

Automobile Sector

Automobile sector has been hugely hit by the lockdown. There was already a downturn in the automobile industry due to less demand. Now the Covid-19 pandemic has made the situation even worse. The manufacturing of automobiles has almost stopped during the lockdown due to minimized or discontinued supplies by the automotive part manufacturing companies. Not just in India, there are huge supply chain disruptions in the automobile sector all over the globe. Manufacturing companies require workers for production which is difficult to do remotely. The decreased demand for vehicles along with non-essential maintenance cost adds up the worries of the automobile sector.

Another industry which is directly affected by the decline in automobile sector growth is the travel and tourism industry.

Travel and Tourism Industry

It is one of the most affected sectors because travel and tourism is restricted due to lockdown imposed in the country. Travel and tourism companies are going through a major setback with no source of income. Companies like MakeMyTrip, Goibibo, etc. are under severe financial strain. Even the hospitality industry and the aviation industry are the ones that are directly affected by the pandemic. With no public transport functioning right now, the government is also suffering losses in this sector. The tourism industry will take time to recover as international travel might stay restricted in some countries for a long time depending upon the extent of the spread of coronavirus.

Real Estate and Construction Sector

The backbone of the real estate and construction sector lies in the construction workers. With a large-scale migration of workers to their hometowns due to the lockdown, it is difficult to predict the situation of the real estate sector after the lockdown. All the construction work in the country is on halt leading to a decline in the stock prices of many real estate companies. Moreover, even after the lockdown, there will be a slow growth of the real estate sector because after suffering from a cash crunch during the lockdown, people will not have enough money to invest in real estate and housing. It also affects the housing development companies. Some major steps have to be taken by the government in this regard to enable the liquidity of money in the economy and to leverage the growth of this sector.

Retail Sector

The whole retail sector is affected by the lockdown except the food and grocery retailers. Due to the restriction of unnecessary movement of people, people are only buying the goods which are necessary. Necessity goods primarily include the food and grocery products. Other products like electrical appliances, furniture, clothing etc. are going through a downturn since they do not come under the necessity goods and with the cash crunch going on in the country, people will not prefer to buy these products until they have enough savings. All the shopkeepers, malls and wholesale traders of these products are affected by the lockdown.

Aviation Sector

With all the domestic and international flights cancelled, the aviation sector is suffering a major setback right now. Employees in various private airlines are suffering from layoffs and pay cuts. Cash reserves of many airline companies are low and might even lead to bankruptcy. Air India is one of the airlines which will be the most affected since it has been in trouble for a long time due to low cash reserves. Not just the aviation sector, it is also the railways which is affected by the lockdown, both being a means of transport. These sectors can expect some measures from the government to gear up their growth post lockdown.

Apart from the above sectors, the unemployment in the country is also on at an all-time high with many companies minimizing their work and thus firing their employees. The banking sector is also highly affected by the lockdown and we can also expect an increase in NPAs (non-performing assets) after the lockdown. Thus, the pandemic has brought the economies of most of the countries on a halt, so it won't be wrong to say that the situation right now is like the 2008 financial crisis. Adequate steps are required to take the economy on a boom, both from the government's end and from the private sector's end.

COVID 19 : AS A PROSPECT FOR INDIAN INDUSTRIES

Given the spread of the Coronavirus across the world, it appears almost certain how a post coronavirus world will be. There will be huge changes in the economic and political system of the world along with a rapid increment or a rapid decline in growth in some sectors. As the virus continues to ravage healthcare systems across the world, the likely future situation can be anticipated. As the two superpowers of the world- U.S.A and China have fought or are fighting Covid-19, they lacked strong global leadership. The post-coronavirus world seems to be giving less powers to these two nations. The economy of all the countries have been severely affected by Covid-19 with U.S.A being one of them. Crude oil prices in U.S.A. fell to negative for the first time in history. People in America are protesting against the lockdown imposed due to coronavirus as they see the economy suffering from a major

setback and their jobs being put at stake. Similarly, the economy of China also suffered a lot when the nation was fighting Covid-19. Now when Coronavirus has spread in countries all over the world, many countries are preferring to restrict their trade with China and there have been speculations that China released this virus intentionally to become the new superpower of the world. It can't be said how true these speculations are but it can definitely be seen that countries have started to minimize their trade relations with China, India being one such country. The Indian Government on April 18, 2020 made amendments to the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy. The amendment in the policy states that a non-resident entity of a country, which shares land border with India or where the beneficial owner of an investment into India is situated in or is a citizen of any such country, can invest only under the government route. This change in the FDI Policy by India is seen as a step by the Indian Government to remove the threat to opportunistic Chinese takeovers of Indian companies whose valuations have been badly hit by the coronavirus pandemic. It is now difficult for countries that share borders with India including China to invest in India. In response to the step taken by the Indian government, China has said that the new amendments in the FDI policy by India violate WTO's principle of non-discrimination and that India should treat investments from each country equally to foster an open and equitable business environment. But despite the accusations made by China on India, it is being said and predicted that many new business opportunities will soon be flooding in India.

In a post Covid-19 world, India's capacity to become a major trading country relies on its capability to cater to a large independent and developing market. In addition, it also depends on India's ability to contain the spread of coronavirus in the whole country. As of now, India has less cases than many other nations of the world but if the pandemic spreads even more drastically in India, it will take a lot of time for the country to come back on its previous tracks and it will also lose the upcoming foreign investments and business opportunities in India.

Major sectors which have been severely hit by the pandemic include the real estate sector and the automobile sector. While on the other hand, the pharmaceutical sector has been seeing a growth. In addition, India has an existing advantage of large-scale pharmaceutical production as compared to other nations. Huge production of the 'Hydroxychloroquine' drug by India and its export to various nations have already showed India's comparative advantage in the pharmaceutical sector. But the overall medical and healthcare sector of India still lacks in many facilities and is behind many developed and developing nations of the world.

Thus, India is coming up as one of the major investment hotspots for various foreign investors in a post Covid-19 world and is all set to become the global services hub for many nations. In order to make the most out of this opportunity, it is important to contain the spread of the virus and making the Indian market more resilient and diverse to meet both the societal and economic needs that are expected to emerge.

COVID 19: MARKETING IN THE TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

For any firm, marketing is one of the most important aspects of the business. It involves selling the product along with market research and advertising and maintaining customer satisfaction throughout. Good marketing has the powers to make even simple products seem out of the box. For example- you can sell a chair by saying that ‘It is a chair’ or by saying that ‘It is a product which is specifically designed to provide you an extraordinary comfort’. Now obviously the second way of selling the chair is much better. But now, we come to the point where we discuss the important factors of marketing. In the above example of selling the chair, one can’t just sell the chair by putting up the above line. Marketing requires adequate research on target customers and their requirements as well as research on the competitors’ working strategy. In today’s dynamic business environment, it requires a firm to take some extraordinary measures to market their product. Each firm is competing to market their product in the best way possible.

Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple Inc. defined marketing as consisting of values. He said, ” *It’s a complicated and noisy world, and we’re not going to get a chance to get people to remember much about us. No company is. So, we have to be really clear about what we want them to know about us.* ” All of us clearly know the success of Apple Company. Founded in 1976, it is now one of the Big Four Companies of the world. One of the reasons behind the success of Apple is its USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of selling a product which is completely different from the competitors and targeting a different consumer group. Maintaining its legacy throughout the years has played a major role in the growth of the company. But now, during these times of Covid-19, are companies like Apple Inc. doing any marketing and if yes, is it beneficial?

The global demand for automobiles and many other goods has fallen due to the lockdowns imposed in most parts of the world. There is subsequently less demand for luxury goods in particular. People are focusing on getting just the basic necessities and so are governments. In these times, the employees of many companies are working from home and those who are in the manufacturing sector and cannot work from home are probably spending their time in

learning new skills required for their organisation. But many brands have not stopped their marketing in these times. Even companies in the automobile sector are branding their products differently. Mercedes-Benz has recently come up with an advertisement in which a Mercedes car is standing outside a house with a line written beneath it, 'Another Mercedes that stands for safety'. While Volvo Cars is marketing themselves by saying, 'Right now, the safest place to be isn't in a Volvo'. Not even the automobile companies, many other companies are promoting their brands taking into full consideration the quarantine. Burger King recently released the recipe of its Whopper burger (one of its dishes), which one can make at home during quarantine. Amul is constantly coming up with new posts everyday based on Prime Minister Modi's speeches and the quarantine period. Dominos has started zero contact delivery to ensure its sales and customer satisfaction. Ola Cabs has come up with a 'Drive the Driver fund' to help all the drivers whose source of income has almost stopped due to the lockdown. And not to forget, there are some companies whose customer base has expanded hugely due to the quarantine. One of them is the Zoom App. It has seen a spike up of 200 million users in March from 10 million users in December. It has become one of the most used apps for video conferencing during these times of social distancing. Zoom is also marketing itself by putting up ads. In one of the ads, it brought its logo closer and put up a line beneath it – Shorten the distance.

Nearly all of the companies are marketing their brands. Even those whose growth is stagnant are participants in this race. To answer the question of whether marketing during this time will be beneficial for them or not, we can say that it will definitely be beneficial. Marketing isn't about advertising a product just when the company wants it to be advertised to increase the sales. Marketing is rather about maintaining long term customer relations and satisfaction. It is about understanding the customers' needs and being consistent in market research. As Steve Jobs said, '*Get closer than ever to your customers. So close that you can tell them what they need well before they realize themselves*'. Thus, marketing in times of the coronavirus has not stopped. In fact, marketing is something which can never stop for the firms aspiring to be on the top.

COVID-19: CHANGING DYNAMICS THE STOCK BEHAVIOUR

More than 114 countries have gone into lockdown, which means that most of the world's population is working from home as far as possible. This pandemic has claimed over 3,00,000 lives with more than 4.5 million cases active all around the world. With the falling

purchases of products like automobiles, clothes, and machines, the stocks of the manufacturers saw a steep dip. As for the Indian stock market, the benchmark stocks of SENSEX and NIFTY went down by 23.8% and 26.03%, respectively. This is lower than what was witnessed in the financial year 2009 when the great recession occurred. The market that falls below 20% from its 52-week high, is called a bear market, the same as the current situation. According to some economists, we can only expect some sort of relief by the end of 2020.

During this time, there have been instances where companies have laid off workers due to a lack of business. Manufacturing units and factories have been asked to pause work, thus leaving many daily wagers out of income. Marianna Mazzucato, an economist, whilst in her opinion on how the US government can use this situation of crisis and come out better than before, mentioned the way Denmark is dealing with this. They have imposed new agreements which says that in a crisis as crucial as COVID-19, ever in the future, households continue to receive food and medicine supplies, but also, no worker can be laid off and continues to receive their pay from home. She also says that the stock markets should be allowed to regain on their own before the government intervenes, as this allows for a more natural recovery. It can be scary to think of a time coming back as financially unfortunate as the great recession. Estimates and current situations are getting difficult to predict and thus stock markets are becoming unpredictable.

Mankind has faced multiple epidemics in the past century and evidently, the economy had suffered. Shedding light on how poorly the markets did in those times, in 2003, SARS was spread but witnessed lesser than 20% of COVID-19's deaths with the markets still existing on the rise of about 16%. MERS was witnessed in the year 2013 with only a small initial drop of 0.29% then regaining strength in less than a month. Ebola in 2018 saw the biggest drop in the market caused due to an epidemic, but only in the first three-month period, by 13.74%. The current bear market would lead to a recession for sure. But also, as Warren Buffet said, that short term markets respond very wildly to the situations in hand whereas, the long-term markets react more rationally. This is similar to what has been asked of the US government by the economist mentioned before. IT is observed in some countries which have started to witness some fall in the cases, thus registering some emerging activities of the stock market. As for India, there are expectations that once the lockdown is lifted, the market will adjust itself according to the then situation, thus reacting appropriately to the after-effects of lockdown. A few days ago, the origin of the virus, Wuhan city of the Hubei province, China,

traced no new cases for the first time since January 2020. And most recently, the lockdown in Wuhan was lifted. With some other regions across Asia lifting the lockdown due to falling positive cases, the stock markets are once again seeing a rise.

Looking at the fact that businesses need money to operate and often this money is in the form of assets/investments. With lesser fresh money flowing in, many businesses require to liquidate whilst the world tries to slow down the virus spread. Liquidation is not as easy as it may sound in such unprecedented times. This shows a more likely event where firms will cease to operate due to the lack of funding. There is surely going to be a way out with all the countries working hand in hand and providing support to each other, with some unfortunate losses of life and businesses, the global economy is expected to emerge as and when the novel coronavirus is under control.

COVID-19: THE PLUMMETING CRUDE OIL PRICES, AN EFFECT

COVID-19 crisis is increasingly proving to be the most deflationary shock to the economy by keeping major productive resources including oil to sit idle. The news was flooded with the prices of crude oil plummeting below zero. However, this did not mean that the actual crude oil was costing negative, but the oil futures traded in the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. This is most widely known as the WTI (West Texas Intermediate crude), obtained physically from Cushing, Oklahoma, USA. Many companies trade in oil futures without physically ever touching the oil itself. They further sell those futures nearer to the closing date to actual users of the oil like refineries. As the settlement date for the May contract approached, these corporates started offloading their futures, but due to a wide lockdown, there was very minimal demand for actual oil or lack of storage spaces. Thus, this resulted in the large plummeting in the prices of oil 'futures'. Over the last few weeks, the major oil consuming products like airlines, factories and normal day to day demand for gasoline has declined. There was no more space for oil storage, but because the market had to clear, the prices fell to negative.

The pandemic has most certainly halted the entire world's economy which has affected not only the oil futures but many other futures relating to food items as well. There has been a \$9 per barrel rise in prices this month already in anticipation for a cut in supply, but, according to analysts, any further increase can only be experienced when countries start to ease the lockdown. These cut in prices, however, did not mean that those still using the oil are now

receiving it at a lower price because the companies have not adjusted the prices according to the international market.

Key oil producers of the world, Saudi Arabia and Russia-led twenty-four countries, commonly known as OPEC+ along with the G20 has decided in consensus to reduce the global output by one-tenth in order to deal with the sudden fall but with a 30 per cent drop in demand. This historic decision should help in bringing the oil industry back from its slumber. However, if the production is reduced, then strategic storing of the oil will begin and when the lockdowns are eventually lifted, there is going to be a sudden rise in demand, most likely, proceeding the supply in the second half of the year 2020. This could also make up for the shortfall that the world currently experiences in the first half of 2020. With this, we should also note that the extremely low prices of oil will definitely affect the livelihood of those employed in the oil industries and also damage the economies of those countries whose production of oil is weaker in comparison.

This historic collapse of about 300 per cent of the price to a negative \$37.63 a barrel on 20th April 2020 shook the world into making quicker decisions in order to minimise its impact. The coronavirus pandemic is showing effects far and beyond, affecting each and every member of the society, from small businesses to the tycoons. Governments worldwide were urged to be spontaneously decisive to protect their citizens from getting infected. The economic impact is increasingly proving to be worse than the great recession or the financial crisis of 2008-09.

COVID 19: DIGITISATION IN INDIA AMIDST LOCKDOWN

Indian government started an initiative named Digital India to promote the digitisation of services. With the increasing opportunities of research for better and cheaper alternatives throughout the world, access to the internet and thus global knowledge became increasingly essential. Digitisation also rapidly entered the banking sector. Businesses are now promoting their offerings through online platforms. It helped them reach to audiences throughout the world.

COVID-19 played a crucial role in educating people about the technical side of the world, which is inevitable in the current situation. As much as it is affecting the economy, it is proving to be beneficial to the IT sector. As the entire country went into lockdown on 23rd March 2020, everyone was advised to work from their homes which meant all the places were shut down, including government offices, corporate offices and educational institutes.

Work from home for most people and online teaching by the educational institutes has shed new light on the digital world for the non-technical public. Banks have asked customers to deal with all their necessary transactions online, as they extended support by making the online transfer of money entirely free of cost, thus allowing more people to use this service in case of an emergency. All the universities and most schools have started teaching the students online, making use of various online platforms like, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet to name a few. Companies have also resorted to various platforms like Adobe Connect, Cisco WebEx, Chorus Call and many more,. Even government meetings have begun taking place via video conferencing as social distancing has become essential.

The current situation has provided the IT developers with a chance to be open to be more experimentative with their research as this is the best time to launch new products and put them to test. With the demand for better platforms and more functions increasing, along with a more feasible and easy learning option, there is a new application being launched almost every day these days. People are learning newer things every day thus encouraging development. There is no doubt that the economy is suffering a huge loss at these unprecedented times but seems like at least one sector is not failing to flourish. A lot of teams within companies are researching to find the most viable option to follow as the list is unending. Online gaming has also witnessed a boom in its users as more people resorted to games as a stress buster, an alternative to a coffee break in office cafés. These allow people to connect with their friends online and play together. A lot of new apps have also been launched for group video calls amongst friends and relatives. It does seem right to say that the IT sector is going to be the one witnessing rising profits after this pandemic tides over. These would make the people of our country more conversed with the digital world and up to speed with newer products.

Many economists from around the world have said that at least the first three quarters of the world will see a definite loss in their economy. It might even lead to a recession. Although not as bad as the great recession of 2007 because unlike the previous one, the world is preparing for it gradually and won't come as a sudden shock. The economy can start to come to life by the fourth quarter, provided this pandemic is safely netted at the expected speed. However, it will take a long time to recover entirely and thus violent policies are not going to benefit anyone.

The digitisation policy started by the Indian government calls to some credit here. With more people gaining access to the internet and computers, and becoming more skilled in IT, the transition to a work from home was much smoother than would have been, if a similar situation arose like 7 years ago. The online platform is not only benefitting those operating from home, but also playing a major role in helping the public stay at home and practice social distancing. Some of the major food delivery applications like Zomato have also started delivering groceries to households. Some big online retailers also added the deliveries of groceries to their operations. The government recently launched an application for this purpose in the areas that needed it the most.

As difficult as the times of social distancing and coronavirus fear are, the digital world has provided massive support to the entire world. People have started to use this time to develop new skills, stay healthy, and started to appreciate the outdoors. The air and water pollution across the world have fallen to the far left behind levels, to something that the climate change activists have been fighting for years.

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC OFFERS A CHANCE FOR INDIA TO BUILD UP A PEOPLE-CENTRIC HEALTH SYSTEM

On January 31, India reported its first coronavirus case, and since then the disease has infected more than 35,000 people across India and led to an extended national lockdown. As India completes two months of national lockdown imposed in response to COVID-19, it is evident how prepared the healthcare system is in managing the pandemic. Considering the resource constraints of both the central and state governments in the healthcare sector, it is apparent that public hospitals alone will not be able to manage the burden of disease. Furthermore, even within the government healthcare system, public health and tertiary care are the weakest links.

The interventions for public health are multidimensional and operate at multiple levels. For the pandemic situation, the primary interventions by national and state governments include mass campaigns to ensure handwashing, observe cleanliness, and an advisory to wear masks along with sturdier measures for the implementation of lockdown. Along with these, a focused and efficient approach is required to prevent community spread through systematic investigation of the susceptible population, case detection, control and treatment.

Countries like South Korea, China and Germany could effectively intervene to a greater extent due to their strength in implementing this core public health intervention. Germany invested in early diagnosis by aggressive testing of the population; therefore, it was successful in maintaining the reproductive rate (R_0)¹ below one and the lowest mortality rate in the world. To realize this, two significant factors are critical for any state or country. Strong laboratory support for disease surveillance and second and most profoundly, a competent public health workforce for active and passive investigation on a regular basis. If the first two factors can effectively be implemented in the Indian context then also there is a hindrance for this action, it is the limited knowledge, myths and perceptions surrounding the new pandemic among the communities. These include the proportion of symptomatic and asymptomatic cases, dynamics of transmission, change in symptoms and the nature of the most common symptoms and the severity of the infection.

¹ R_0 determines the potential for an epidemic spread in a totally susceptible population in the absence of specific control measures. The value of R_0 greater than one indicates the number of infectious persons is likely to increase and the value of R_0 less than one indicates the transmission is likely to die out.

The trends and scenario in India

India has reported a significant rise and spread of novel coronavirus (nCOV) with more than 3000 deaths. The rise in cases doesn't represent a national trend as a few states show the difference in probability of the outbreak, spread, and severity of the epidemic in a short time. Several studies have shown that recovery rate has remained the same, but the reproduction rate and case fatality rate (CFR)² varied across the regions. The western states of Maharashtra and Gujarat showed the highest number of confirmed cases and deaths, whereas the North-eastern states show a contradicting picture. Kerala had a significant rise in the number of cases during the initial phase but soon indicated the containment in the infection spread and rose in the number of recovered cases.

Spread trends (cumulative)



(a) Kerala



(b) Maharashtra

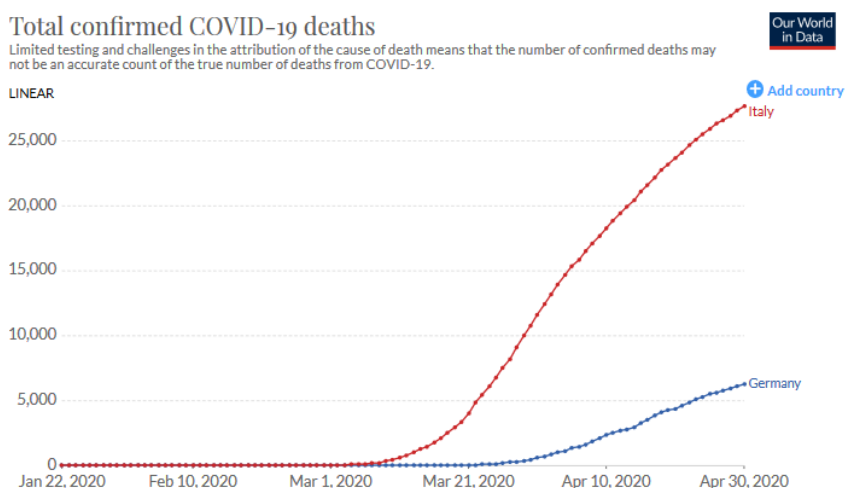
² The case fatality rate is defined as the percentage of individuals with symptomatic or confirmed diseases who die from the disease.

(Compiled from state government numbers (state press bulletins, Press Trusts of India, ANI reports)

<https://www.covid19india.org/>

The Germany parallel

This may not be as impossible as it sounds. According to Johns Hopkins University, Germany has one of the lowest case-fatality rates in the world, with 6,572 deaths for 162,530 detected infections, the case fatality rate of just over 4.06 per cent, compared to around 13 - 16 per cent in Italy, UK and, France. It is surprising to appreciate the contrast with Italy because the two European nations have the highest percentage of residents aged 65 or over in the region. Additionally, the Bloomberg Global Health Index recommends Italians have a healthier lifestyle than Germans. In Germany, the first outbreak of nCOVID-19 began earlier than Italy, but Germany has had many fewer deaths. Their strategy to tackle the virus hinged on early kick start of the information campaign and a broader testing strategy; testing to a large number of people relative to the population and early hospitalization of patients even with mild symptoms. Germany has the oldest publicly funded healthcare system in Europe and part of nation's preparedness lies in the detail it spends a greater proportion of its GDP on healthcare than most countries — [11.2 per cent, compared to 9.6 per cent in the UK.](#)



Variable time span Dec 31, 2019 – Apr 30, 2020

Data published by European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

<https://github.com/owid/covid-19-data>

The Kerala analogous

While Kerala has till now stated over 650 cases, its death toll is still moderately low — 4 deaths as compared to 27 in Tamil Nadu and 22 in Karnataka, both neighbouring states. The state has won praise for its skilful handling of the pandemic that has killed more than 300000 people around the world and disrupted the healthcare systems even in resource-rich countries like the United States.

This has happened even though Kerala faces challenges such as a high population density, high proportion of the elderly (12.6% of the total population) who are predominantly susceptible to the disease, and economic constraints that trailed two devastating floods and the [Nipah virus](#) outbreak in 2018 and 2019. The Kerala government's early preparedness to the pandemic and the investments it made towards extensive testing and surveillance bear testimony to the state's commitment to public health and welfare—an anomaly in the current national climate. The system's ability to perform swiftly, function efficiently and democratically centres on the cooperative participation of the common people, local self-government bodies, health workers and the will of state government. It took decades in the making of an efficient healthcare system.

Public health workforce

During the crisis, a country needs to build on its existing strengths. The most decisive question is which health system staff will be efficient to accomplish the task of community engagement. It is the real challenge for India, which has a weak public health system. Over the years, the national health system becomes subjugated by curative care services and off late by an insurance-based tertiary care system. Still, India failed to build a robust public health workforce. As a nation, one of the fortes we developed in the recent past is the Integrated Disease Surveillance Project (IDSP) for tracking epidemics in the community. Ironically, it is well systemized at the state and district level though entirely inadequate in terms of grassroots level staff.

In urban areas, the only field staff engages as frontline workers for the health services is the multipurpose worker (MPW) cadre, both male and female. They are employed with urban primary health centres and are engaged in 'public health work'. MPW cadre is virtually eroding as for several years many state governments have stopped appointments.

The challenges of pulling these grassroots level workers might lead to a graver epidemic situation as all other activities can supplement but cannot substitute this core activity of case detection and referral for treatment. The most effective response during COVID-19 includes contact tracing, sample collection for testing and routine surveillance in the community. The efficiency of this task depends on the capability and active efforts of public health workers.

The success story of Kerala has a name for these grassroots-level health workers, namely Junior Health Inspector (JHI), Health Inspector (HI) Health Supervisors and Junior Public Health Nurse (JPHN). The public health workforce is the real warriors, and their response at the grassroots level will decide the state's fight against COVID-19 and fate for this public health emergency.

The governance of care

Community and voluntary efforts are essential, but cannot withstand state-wide healthcare systems. It requires substantial financial and administrative commitments that only governments can endure. In Kerala, devolution of power, fiscal and decision-making responsibilities to Local Self Government institutions are not a substitute for government investment in healthcare. Around 60% of the health department's budget remains to be committed to human resources. The Niti Aayog's Health Index Report for June 2019 shows that in the state of Kerala, only 2.4% of the vacancies for medical officers were vacant at the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in 2017-18. The specialists' vacancies at district hospitals too had come down to 13.5% from over 21.5% in 2015-16.

The complexities

Considering the constant rate of rising in nCOVID cases impacted the majority of poor and marginalized people, the central government administration may argue that treatment for COVID-19 should be included under Ayushman Bharat. But, the critical question is, what about the large population of the segregated middle class, many of whom are working in the

formal sector? Many do not have savings, secure employment, nor do they have insurance cover.

The crises helped reveal the urgent need of public health governed system. It can be a watershed moment for the establishment of stronger public healthcare within India's health services. It can only be possible when a significant percentage of national/state GDP is spent on healthcare addressing the need for human resources to build a skilled and competent public health workforce as the frontline workers.

Every crisis is an opportunity to learn from the mistakes and build upon what is lacking.

COVID 19: HAS IT EMERGED AS A BLESSING TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

The spread of the pandemic, COVID 19, has transformed the world in a matter of few months. The pandemic which started in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and later caught hold of the entire world economy has changed the entire way of life of billions of people. The people who have been infected with the disease, those who have been treated or recovered are all made to sit back at their homes to fight against it. The pandemic has put the entire world economy on a pause.

Flights have been cancelled abruptly, with some bring asked to turn back mid-air. The roads and streets experienced deserted looks. Most of the businesses, restaurants, travel agencies etc. came to a standstill. The world economy is facing its worst crisis. But all these downfalls have led to certain unexpected positive outcomes. For instance, the environmental conditions have improved worldwide. There have been a number of positive reports coming from the entire world in this regard. China, the first country to face the pandemic and implement the measures, reported 25% decline in carbon emissions. On the other hand, New York reported a decline of 40%. India, which has been trying to battle the air pollution saw an all-time rise in the air quality. The air quality index (AQI) which previously stood at 159, saw an all-time drop to AQI 46 within the first week of law enforcement. PM 2.5, a particle which has a diameter of 2.5 micrometres can easily enter lungs and bloodstreams, could have worsen the situation in this pandemic has shown 46% depletion rate. The combustion and industrial pollution measured with PM 10 concentration has shown depletion rate of 50%. "It is critical to note that we are witnessing clear skies primarily because of the reduction in non-essential travel and industrial processes. Once normalcy is restored, it would be absolutely essential to ensure that dirty industrial operations are checked and people, in general, reconsider their

mobility choices,” addressed by Tanushree Ganguly, programme associate, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (Mohanty, 2020).

Countries like Spain, UK, and Italy had similar stories to tell. With industries shut, a global decline of 40% in coal use has been reported which majorly contributes to the improved conditions in environment. Pollution and greenhouse emissions have also fallen. Air quality has improved. Smog has given way to clear skies. The marine life can be seen with increased activities. Birds and animals seen moving around at their own accord. An air quality researcher at NASA’s Goddard space flight centre said: “This is the first time I have seen such a dramatic drop-off over such a wide area for a specific event.” (NASA Space Observatory, 2020)

There is another part to the same story. If some see it as a reliable and long lasting impact on the environment, they can be proved wrong. Many environment sustainability projects have been stopped due to this pandemic. The United States saw discontinuing of many recycling programs. Italy banned sorting of wastes by infected people. Many countries also put forward an issue regarding the people’s preference of single use plastic containers. India for instance has faced a major issue of water shortage, because of which large groups of people could be seen around the water tanks violating the social distancing. With more and more people at home, there had been a steep increase in number of home deliveries and due to relying more on single use containers, the garbage to be disposed of has also increased.

There are millions of people being treated all over the world. The personal protective equipment used by the healthcare sectors can only be worn once while treating a patient. It has resulted in rise in huge increase in medical waste as well. Where on one side there has been a decline in global oil demand by countries, the demand for electricity consumption has been on a continuous increase. Disposing of such large amounts of waste after the pandemic ends could bounce back the emissions levels to either same or a higher rate.

As stated by the UN Environment Chief, “And as we inch from a “war-time” response to “building back better”, we need to take on board the environmental signals and what they mean for our future and wellbeing, because COVID-19 is by no means a “silver lining” for the environment.” (Climate Diplomacy, 2020). The UN in several reports has described COVID19 as a zootonic disease i.e which transfers from animals to humans. The emergence of a zootonic disease is entirely due to the human activities like deforestation, illegal animal trade etc.

Just by looking at the positive sides and concluding that it has improved the environmental conditions would not be correct. If we look at the time of Global Financial Crisis, 2008, similar situation was experienced. The world experienced a decline of 1.3% of total emissions of harmful gases which include of carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide etc. but it did not remain for a long time as by 2010 it reached back to high levels.

Taking an example from the previous crisis, this cannot be seen as a realistic and reliable way for climate change. The drop in pollution levels and carbon emissions is not likely to last. What will happen after the pandemic ends and life gets back to normal? Will this short term hit help us achieve our long term goal of climate change? This question can only be answered when the time comes!

THE RISE OF ASYMPTOMATIC CASES, CAN THE THEORY OF HERD IMMUNITY BE PRACTICED?

To begin with what exactly is asymptomatic? A disease is considered asymptomatic when a person may be a carrier of disease but does not show any symptoms. With an infection like COVID19 which has already caused a great loss to life around the world, being asymptomatic will worsen the situation for every country. India which is undertaking the practice of testing and screening of a large population, is witnessing the tide turning more threatening as many people who tested positive for COVID19 were found to be asymptomatic.

The test done for the pandemic involves both, the antigen test for viral presence in the body and antibody test to test the immune presence made for an individual. The asymptomatic cases have surely put a question mark on the test developed to test the presence of the infection.

RISE OF ASYMPTOMATIC CASES IN INDIA

In India, the asymptomatic cases mostly include people under the age of 50. It came as a relief for the country because of the fact that the false positive cases, meaning who are tested positive but do not show any symptoms, are recovering on their own without showing any symptoms. Health care officials said the increase of such cases in age groups less than 50, self-recovery is possible because of their greater fitness and higher immunity. If the cases had been increasing for the age groups above 50, it would have been really difficult to control the situation. In any case, if the infection results in higher immunity in these young individuals,

their plasma can be used by health care workers to cure the seriously ill elderly people but cannot be used to cure each person. India has so far faced the situation quite bravely with only 2% critical cases reported, as in, patients who have to be put on ventilators.

But what still remains the challenge is to halt the spread from these mobile people. It will become a tedious task to go through and sieve each and every person living in the second most populous country. Therefore, Indian medical researchers are trying to combat the spread of this infection by these 'silent spreaders' and framing a way to ensure door-to-door testing like the one used for polio, for elderly people who might be at high risk but fail to show any symptoms at this point. "Of 100 people with infection, 80 do not have symptoms," said Raman R Gangakhedkar, chief epidemiologist, Indian Council of Medical Research (Thacker, 2020).

Another concern that was raised by the medical officers was the act of door to door can be quite costly and time consuming. Given the fact that many citizens have been hiding, going on with the constant strategy will not at all help in India. Rather than aiming for testing each and every person belonging to 50 plus age group, they should begin by testing in hotspot areas but with varied strategies.

At the same time if the idea of mass tracing and quarantine worked in our country, the number of infected people can be on a decline on a pretty much high rate. But this can only be made possible with the support of people and proper medical help, which surely lacks right now. Asymptomatic cases have shown a variation from 50% to 82% in India. 75% of the total reported cases in Punjab, 50% in Karnataka, 65% in Maharashtra, 75% in Uttar Pradesh and 82% in Assam were asymptomatic cases.

THE THEORY OF HERD IMMUNITY

Herd immunity can be described as and when a large group of people have become immune to the virus or the infectious disease providing protection to those who are not immune. Thinking about herd immunity for an infection like COVID19 would not be best approach to tackling the disease. Since the day when pandemic laid its ground on India, the scenario has been changing every now and then. There is no exact rate at which the virus is spreading. Trying the practice of herd immunity is surely not the solution for the Indians.

Herd immunity is fathomable for diseases or infections for which an exact growth rate can be predicted. Putting this in practice without a proper vaccination, would absolutely be a terrible

thought. In case of India, where most of the infected people belong to elder age group with lower immunity, the practice will not at all be beneficial.

Many drugs like the one used for malaria-hydroxychloroquine have been given to infected people who showed speedy recovery signs. A drug named Kaletra used in treatment of HIV has been tested for recovery of health officials. Treating a COVID-positive patient with plasma therapy has also been tested and shown positive results. But these treatment practices cannot be used in long term or on a mass scale until a proper vaccination is formed. Therefore, for now the best and effective way still remains of social distancing and personal hygiene. Wearing of masks and applying by the rules of lockdown has to be ensured, as for the studies for countries like Japan, Italy etc. show these rise in cases can be very dangerous for the country.

SOCIAL IMPACTS

STRUGGLE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS AND DAILY WAGERS

‘Migrant workers’ is a widely heard term these days across the country. It refers to people who leave their homes to work in other cities, whether in the same country or internationally. India went into full lockdown to control the spread of COVID-19 at an early stage. This led to a large number of construction workers being stranded at the construction sites, with no public transports in operation. Some secluded sites had essentials’ shops at a minimum distance of 25 km, including inter-state buses and national railways. Most such workers worked at factories or casual workers. The lockdown meant all the factories and construction sites were shut, leaving them without work and thus no income. Most of these work on a contractual basis and are paid daily via cash in hand. Some states even witnessed the anger of these workers as they are left without work and money.

The spread of COVID-19 can be attributed to international travel to a great extent, of which migrants form a significant part. As the spread increased, many Indian workers in the international market decided to travel back to their home country as India was experiencing much lesser cases on a comparative basis. Initially, only the people arriving from China or other severely affected parts of the world or those seeing any symptoms were checked for the virus, but for obvious reasons, no one could ensure if the others had it or not. This played a role in the spike of the numbers. Although, it is much to the appreciation that the Indian government took strong measures at a very early stage to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Many workers were forced to take unpaid leaves from work as the government imposed a complete lockdown. Most of the young workers often live in cities by renting a place. Paying the rent on time can only be possible when they get paid. The central government, in the light of the current situation, has issued an order stating that the landlords cannot take rents for 1 month from the poor workers or migrant laborers. Also, under the Natural Disaster Management Act, it was ordered that the employers must pay the wages fully when due, without any pay cut.

As the government has no say in the internal matters of a private company, some companies, due to lack of business has indeed laid off employees or resorted to pay cuts. It has been estimated that around 80,000 people will be left unemployed in India. Many businesses are expected to go under due to a lack of funding. According to a recent report by the United Nations, nearly 200 million cutbacks are expected in the next three months with the global unemployment figure already standing at 190 million. This is proving to be far

worse than the financial crisis of 2008-09. The worst-hit sectors are business services and administration, manufacturing services, food and accommodation, and retail and wholesale, which makes up 37.5% of global employment. The hours are expected to keep declining for the next two months by nearly 7%. In India, almost 90% are employed in the informal sector, leaving them much more vulnerable to the virus, as these include street vendors, sweepers, food servers, etc. Urban areas are more infected than the rural as the hustle there is stronger and the use of manual services like domestic workers, transport workers, etc. is more. The lockdown, however, forced these workers to go back to the rural areas, thus exposing the areas to the risk. This is true for countries like Nigeria and Brazil as well.

Initiatives towards protecting the poor workers were started by the central and state governments, starting from providing free food supplies to the ration card holders under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA). Delhi government took an initiative to pay all the registered unemployed construction workers an amount of Rs. 5,000. In support of the unorganized construction workers who survive off the daily wages, the Labour Ministry has announced to utilize the cess fund of Rs. 52,000 crore through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

It can be rightly remarked that appropriate policy measures need to be taken around the world to protect the working population and small businesses. The crashing economy will hit the poor workers most severely and for a developing economy like India which depends largely on these, it is all the more crucial to take the necessary steps as soon as possible.

RISING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

COVID-19, not only a virus infection but also lead to widespread economic uncertainty, anxiety along with the stay at home rules. Ever wondered how staying indoors with the same people all day long for over a month does to the mental health of people? Towards strategizing against the spread of the COVID-19, various governments overlooked several other social aspects, one of them being domestic violence. It is generally known as the violence against the partner at home, but it very commonly encompasses child and elderly abuse. People are losing jobs in addition to being confined in their homes which is resulting in adverse effects on mental health. What implications does this have? Various women are experiencing a pandemic within a pandemic called domestic violence. Whatever might the situation be, violence should never be acceptable. Unfortunately, various people still go through domestic violence. Not only India but all around the world, we regularly hear about

cases of domestic violence and child abuse. If that was the scenario with busy life schedules, now, with the increasing anxiety amongst people, a clear rise can be seen in such cases.

National Commission for Women is an establishment concerned with Government of India's policies that affect women. It witnessed a 100 per cent increase in reports regarding issues of domestic violence during the lockdown days. The 181 helpline of the government which provides support for consequences of violence like mental health and counselling and also psycho-socio support are also not able to handle efficiently the sudden rise in cases.

A combination of interventions is very crucial. When the lockdown lifts, women will be able to leave their homes and would require immediate mental health support and counselling. This period is a good time to prepare teams for fieldwork towards this. Tele-counselling and city-wide helpline are important. Training to identify such cases and legal counselling should also be set up. Awareness campaigns on identifying domestic violence would be a huge step towards helping along with educating about the immediate steps and helpline numbers. NGOs and activists should pursue strict action by police and the law. Not only this but also the society itself plays a crucial role in combatting this sickness by not being just by-standers but offering support to the vulnerable ones and checking on friends and family to ensure their safety.

Several petitions around the world have been filed for the governments to take action. A similar petition filed in the Delhi High Court mentions that the helpline received 92,000 related calls in the initial 11 days of lockdown. This petition was filed by All India Council of Human Rights, Liberties and Social Justice (AICHLS) with a plea that the impact of lockdown and its subsequent economic effects, domestic violence against women and children is significant. This petition urges the Honourable Court to acknowledge and devise methods to help and protect the trapped victims locked down with the abusers.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), looking at the rising cases of domestic violence in European countries and the USA, issued guidelines to several health sectors throughout the world towards steps to help women who are facing violence and are stuck at home during this lockdown due to the pandemic.

Domestic violence has been an issue in this world for a long time now, but the enforced lockdown has worsened the situation. Mental health has also been affected adversely in these times with more and more cases of depression and anxiety. The factors could be a long list with some of them being economic losses faced by the business, pay cuts or job loss. The

education industry has also widely suffered putting the next academic year as well as job market entry at risk. The need to contain proper mental balance has increased but the success is much lower than expected. With such an increasing rate, availability of support and counselling is thus falling short. Urgent action is required to ensure the safety of the victims on a countrywide level.

FORCE MAJEURE REVISITED

The lockdown imposed due to coronavirus caused disruptions in supply chains in many sectors. The lockdown has made the parties in a contract, difficult to fulfill the contract or to delay the services. The companies are not able to perform their obligations under customer agreements because of suppliers' non-performance or delay in performance. The suppliers are bound in the lockdown and thus, Covid-19 is preventing them from fulfilling their obligations. Such scenarios are leading to disputes among suppliers and companies and disputes among business partners across the globe. This is a situation which is common in many countries in the world right now. Legal terms define such instances by a clause named 'Force Majeure'. It is a French phrase which means 'Superior Force'.

Force Majeure events include Act of God, or natural disasters, war or war-like situations, labor unrest or strikes, epidemics etc. The laws relating to it are embodied under Sections 32 and 56 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872. The clause basically protects a party from fulfilling its contractual obligations by cancelling or postponing the contract as defined by the law. Many Indian firms are seeking protection under this clause due to the lockdown imposed by coronavirus. But there is a question which continuously persists in all trade dealings between parties that if coronavirus can be considered a superior force for the application of Force Majeure or not. It is to be noticed that it is not easy to seek protection under the clause unless it is specified in the contract. There has to be specific terms in the contract in order to avoid contractual obligations on the grounds of Force Majeure. Indian courts have legally recognized the concept and termed it as appropriate.

The specific terms to be used in the contract for implication of a Force Majeure vary widely depending upon the type of deal. In case of India, a force majeure clause cannot be implied and thus it must be expressly stated and it depends upon the language of the clause. Suppose if in any Indian contract, a 'pandemic' is stated as a clause for unfulfillment of the contract, then the party which seeks protection under the clause will be provided protection but only when it proves that the contract could not be fulfilled by any ways. Thus, even if

specific terms are used in the contract implying cancellation or postponement of contract, the party seeking protection must prove in the court of law that it has taken all possible steps to avoid or mitigate the event and its effects. The protection to a party largely depends on the language of the clause and is interpreted on a case to case basis.

After the application of a force majeure clause, different remedies could be provided to the party but largely, remedy depends on the language of the contract and clause. Some remedies might provide for cancellation of the contract while others might provide for postponement of the obligation until the event is resolved.

The law of Force Majeure in India has been laid down in the seminal decision of the Supreme Court in the case of *Satyabrata Ghose vs Mugneeram Bangur & Co. (AIR 1954 SC 44)*. This case involved a negligence of obligation by Mugneeram Bangure & Company. Satyabrata Ghose (plaintiff), assignee of Bejoy Krishna Roy sued the company for non-performance in development of lands which were sold to plaintiff. The respondent cited 'war like situations' as the reason for non-completion of the contract. Further, there was no time period mentioned in the contract. The case was first taken to the trial court, then to the high court and finally to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court announced the case in favor of plaintiff and plaintiff's suit was decreed with costs. It was observed that the fulfillment of the contract was not impossible taking into considerations Section 56 of the Indian Contract Act.

Further, a recent decision in this regard was taken by the Supreme Court of India in the case of *Energy Watchdog vs CERC (2017) 14 SCC 80*. This case between major power producers such as Tata and Adani on one hand and CERC (Central Electricity Regulatory Commission) on the other hand, had huge implications on the contract law and the law of force majeure in particular.

Force Majeure is indeed coming up as one of the most talked about legal terms during these times but the actual protection behind this clause lies in the language of the clause and specific terms used therein.

THE SHADOW PANDEMIC IN INDIA

While the whole country is on lockdown, NCW (National Commission for Women) reported a spike in the domestic violence complaints. The total number of complaints rose from 116 in the first week of March (March 2-8), to 257 in the final week (March 23-April 1). It is nearly a two-fold increase in the number of complaints. It is not just the situation in India, the situation was the same in China when it was in lockdown due to coronavirus.

UN Women's Executive Director, in a statement on the violence against women and girls during the lockdown, termed the pandemic as a 'Shadow Pandemic'. The effects of this Shadow Pandemic are spread across the world. There is a spike in the domestic violence cases in each country which is on lockdown. The reason behind this surge in cases is said to be the presence of the victim and the abuser in the same house. The U.S. National Domestic Violence hotline received over two thousand calls since mid of March till mid of April. On the other hand, the National Commission for Women (NCW) in India after seeing a spike in the number of domestic violence complaints, released a helpline number for domestic violence complaints until the lockdown is over in India. It is also to be noticed that this is just the number of reported cases. There might be many more cases of domestic violence in India which are not reported. According to the National Family Health Survey, 2015-16, one-third of women in India have experienced domestic violence but only less than one per cent have sought help from the police. To control domestic violence during the lockdown, the government of Italy launched an app to seek help for domestic violence victims. The Government of France has even encouraged domestic violence victims to seek help at pharmacies.

In a country like India, where a majority of the population is poor and there is an under reporting of cases, it will be very difficult to assess the actual number of domestic violence cases, especially during the lockdown. Domestic violence cases are also under reported because of the presence of the abuser in the house. Some organizations in India working for this purpose reported that women called on helpline numbers when the abuser was not in the house or late at night. The lockdown has prevented movement of people, so these women cannot go anywhere else to save themselves. Domestic violence cases in India are more common in poor households where the man is an alcoholic and the family runs on a daily wage. Most of such people are daily wage earners and migrants where the condition of the family is poor. Another reason for the under reporting of cases in India is the harassment or

embarrassment which some Indian women think they will have to face if they report the abuser.

Along with the economy taking a downturn due to Covid-19 pandemic, it is also the condition of women in many households which is going through a downturn. It is not only about the increase in domestic violence cases now. It is also about the increased burden on the women of the house. For working women who are currently working from home, the burden has increased even more. The increased pressure of taking care of family without any house help along with the job is putting the condition of many Indian Women on a downfall. In most families of India where there is still a patriarchal system, it is difficult to get men of the house to help the women in work.

Physical confinement in a house has invoked a problem for all of the countries which are in a lockdown now and it requires immediate solutions from the administration. Like the NCW launched a helpline number, there can be many other measures which the government of India can take to increase the reporting of cases in order to safeguard the victims of domestic violence in India. Reaching women who want help is one of the most important aspect of this. Thus, until the lockdown ends, such cases will keep growing and the unreported cases too, if the government does not take steps to control the violence.

COVID-19, LOCKDOWN AND UNITY

Unity among the different races and the different religions of India is indispensable to the birth of national life’. Mahatma Gandhi. These lines perfectly describe the importance of unity in a country like India. India is a land full of diversity unlike any other country in the world. People belonging to different religions, different places, different races and castes live here freely. The Preamble of the Constitution of India recognizes India as a secular country. Secularism is defined as freedom and equal respect for all the citizens regardless of their religion. Each citizen is allowed to profess, practice and propagate the religion of their choice. Unity has always been a pillar for the democracy of India and all the citizens should strive to keep this unity alive. But there are times when we see riots happening in the country due to religious differences between people. The riots are usually communal riots like the recent North-East Delhi riots. Communal riots sometimes seem like a recent phenomenon in India incited by the British Rule policy in the 18th century. People need to realize the importance of unity in a nation and need to abide by the rules of secularism. In these times, lockdown imposed due to the coronavirus has forced the people of India to sit inside their

homes. People are doing miscellaneous things at home while on the other hand, the warriors of the country including doctors, nurses, policemen, etc. are in the battlefield fighting the pandemic.

When China was fighting COVID-19, the doctors there said that it was just a little hope that kept them going. There were thousands of cases in China a few weeks after the first case was discovered. The doctors were working full time and strict restrictions were imposed in different parts of the country. People were contributing to the fight by staying at their homes. The whole nation had to be united in order to fight the deadly virus. And within another few weeks, the nation was slowly recovering. Now we see China taking up all the restrictions imposed and opening up slowly. The message learnt from this phase of China is that unity and hope are one of two important abstract things which are required to fight coronavirus. The whole world is learning this lesson and fighting COVID-19. In Italy, people are applauding the healthcare workers and doctors by coming out in their balconies and applauding them. In India, Prime Minister Modi urged the nation to come up in their balconies and clap or bang thalis for praising the warriors of the country who are fighting COVID-19 in hospitals, police stations, roads, etc. Some days later, he again urged the nation to switch off all the lights of the house and come up in their balconies and light up diyas, candles, torches, etc. in order to show unity of the nation in this fight against coronavirus. Huge number of people did these things and contributed their part to the nation's fight. While major contribution of citizens in this fight is staying home, but these things like lighting up diyas and clapping for the essential services workers surely inculcated unity in the whole nation. Scenes like this are rare in a country like India where communal riots have become a common phenomenon. Such symbolic unity in these times is the need of the hour.

But there were people who condemned the act citing various reasons. There were doctors who tweeted about the decline in supply of masks and other essentials in hospitals and equally condemned the act. There were tweets of people condemning the act of applauding for the essential services workers since clapping, drum beating and various noises combined, created a lot of noise pollution and harmed the peace of the birds and animals. Some people in general have the view that the government should rather focus on improving health and medical facilities rather than asking the people to do such acts. In my view, medical facilities are the most important things required right now for the nation and adequate measures should be taken to revamp the health structure. But acts like this definitely unite the people of a country and give them a feeling of belongingness. These also give hopes to essential services

workers and make them feel motivated. Communication with the people, in these times, is very important. It is very important to make each and every citizen understand the urgency of the situation and to make them act however is necessary. In these times, people are having no physical contact with anyone outside their house and the social distancing tends to bring a feeling of loneliness. To unite the nation and to make social distancing less difficult, acts like these are good enough unless they hurt any being.

It is a time for the nation to stand up and stay united. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, ‘Unity, to be real, must stand the severest strain without breaking’.

CITIZENS DURING THE LOCKDOWN

A nationwide lockdown was called out in an attempt to put a halt on the coronavirus cases in India. The lockdown was implemented with a view to break the chain of the community transmission and to refrain India from entering the stage 3 which can be described as a phase when it becomes nearly impossible to locate the source of transmission; it becomes a tedious task to control the spread at this point. As stated by World Health Organisation (WHO), ‘As the nation of 1.3 billion people shut down, it could either make or break the global war. Because of India’s prior experience of eradicating polio and smallpox, it holds tremendous capacity to deal with the pandemic.’

India’s actions to curb the spread have been admired by the entire world. While India put travel limitations generally early, and numerous states immediately shut off access to open places, the nation's high population, overburdened general wellbeing framework, high risk of non-transferable ailments and the possibility of transmission from young individuals to elders in joint families all compelled the nation to impose strict curbs.

With praises and honour from the entire world, did India actually see a decline in the number of positive cases? Evidence shows otherwise, since the number of cases have been on an upward trend since the start of the pandemic. There have been ways in which the people reacted which made it quite tough. The Centre for Disease Dynamics, Economics and policy official, Ramanan Laxminarayan quoted, ‘There will have to be unique Indians response to COVID-19 situations.’ The statement holds to be true seeing the current scenario.

While announcing the lockdown, there were repeated assurances given by the officials for adequate supply of essential commodities. The Centre and the states were seen convincing people to stay at home while they are working to bring out a method for easy delivery of the

essential products. To keep a check of the availability of the goods and persuading people to stay home, there were meetings held through video conferencing with different vendors, retailers, e-commerce sites etc. to keep a check on 'there is enough for everyone'. With companies like Grofers and Big Basket, several measures with door to door delivery system were also discussed.

But what actually happened or how people behaved was complete opposite of that. The first and the foremost result of the lockdown was seen with the rabble of citizens at general stores across the country. People could be seen scrambling for groceries, dairy products etc. despite the warnings issued by government officials and law enforcement officials. Social distancing which was told be the first thing that people should keep in mind in case they had to leave their homes was seen withering away with the act displayed by the citizen. The resulting outcome was that the number of cases and deaths continued to rise in weeks that followed, despite the lockdown.

Now, taking a look at the poor, daily wage earners and labour class of the Indian society, too had an answer to this situation. The fear that caught most the poor people was that 'hunger will kill them before the coronavirus'. Major part of the Indian workforce is employed in the informal sector from domestic help to street vendors to construction workers, most of them being migrant workers. With a single announcement their life had come to a pause. The domestic house helps were stuck in their homes. All construction works were stopped. All railways and airports being shut. This made each and every person sit back in their homes with no source of income and merely limited commodities to survive on.

As a result of this, huge crowds started gathering at bus and train stations nationwide with a hope to safely reach back to their villages. The movement was initiated by people with a simple thought in mind of reaching home where they do not have to pay rent and will get food for their survival. With what can be seen as lack of planning done by the government or ignorance to this section of the society, there was massive fleeing of workers towards their villages. There for the people who couldn't get access to the transports were seen walking miles.

This manoeuvre further alarmed the situation for the spread of the disease. What most of them feared was this movement could cause the spread of the disease to the rural villages where health facilities are not at all advanced and furthermore is place of residence for major Indian population. Consequently, the officials planned for corrective measures such as food

security, providing them with minimum amount under certain schemes to curb this movement. However this move was met with much criticism as experts felt it could have been delayed until the masses were ready.

Another incident that came into limelight was the Tablighi Jamaat, which is a religious gathering, held every year in March for Muslims to practice their religion. Amidst the spread of the pandemic it was requested to call off but it did not. As the news about the incident spread, what was noticed is majority going against their community. The evidence of it was drawn from a simple act where some citizens were seen refusing to collect groceries after knowing the community the delivery person belonged to.

These groups and gatherings have only worsened the situation in the country. “Earlier India saw the doubling rate for cases as 7.4 days, currently it is 4.1 days with new additional cases coming everyday” said Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Health Ministry (Sharma, 2020).

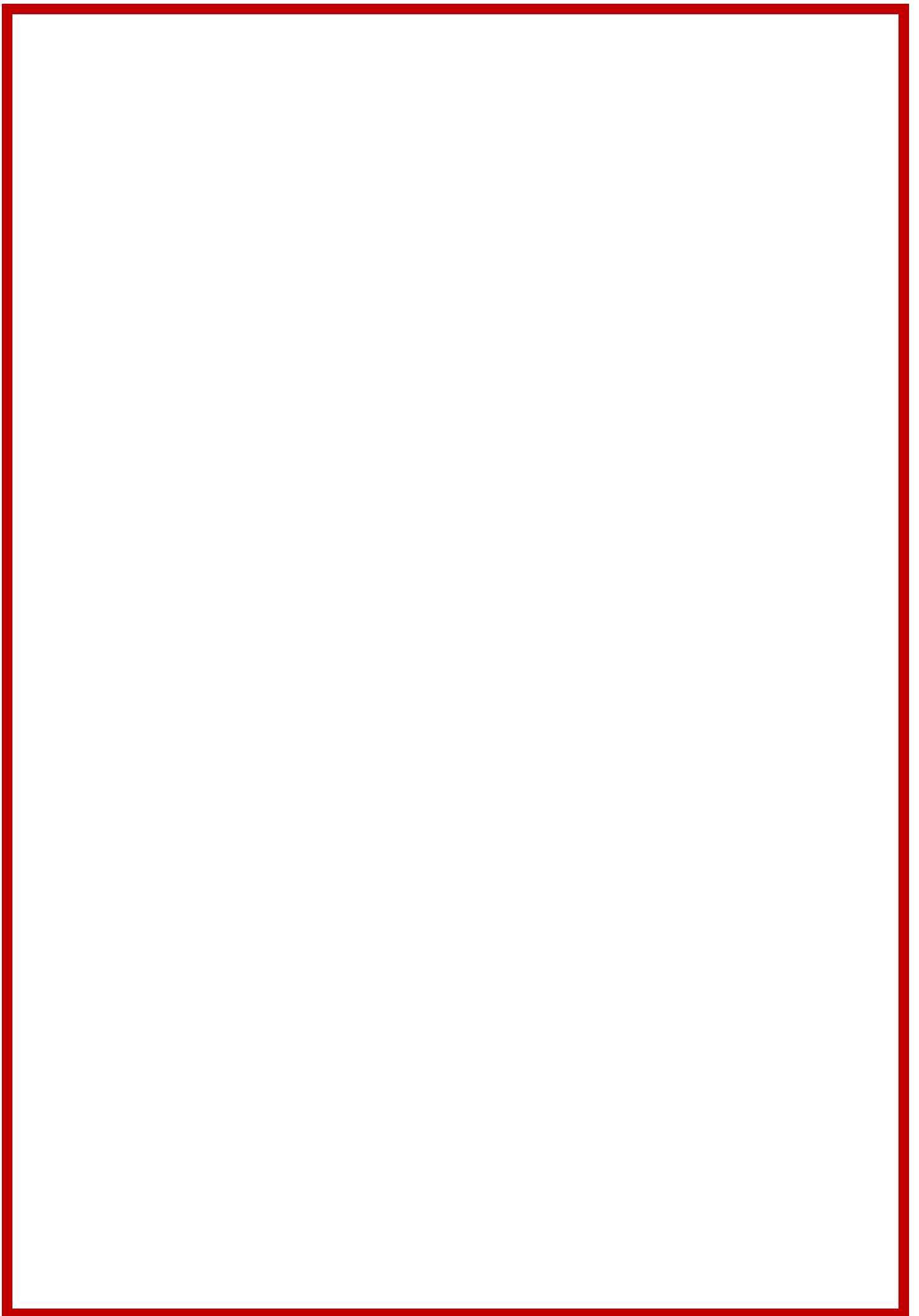
Putting all their hard work and 24*7 hours working, many doctors have succumbed to the disease. But what really was disheartening is people threw stones and pebbles on the families of the doctors during the funeral hours. Even some areas reported of same activities against doctors and police coming for their help. This is not what they deserved. With citizens raising their voices against such acts, the officials made laws to ensure the safety of their helpers during this period. The personnel working for the common good day and night should not be treated this way at any cost.

Amidst the pandemic, some citizens acted as a help to the society. Chennai and some of the other southern states undertook the task of setting up of relief centres for labourers and other poor people who have been stranded in the states. The provisions to provide them with food and other necessary things have also been kept in mind. An old lady, native of Delhi took up the task of stitching masks and distributing them to the poor and backward sections of the society. The government joined hands and provided assistance to make stitch and make masks available for everyone residing in the slum areas. A campaign called as ‘relief riders’ has been started by young generation in Bangalore. This campaign was introduced to deliver groceries and other essential items to older people keeping in mind the social distancing and pedalling their ways to reduce pollution..

With the extension of lockdown, it can only be made successful only if all people practice social distancing and stay at home. However since the guidelines were not strictly abided by, it took only 8 days for India to go from 10,000 to 20,000 cases (Sinha, 2020). The citizens

should try and abide by all the rules formulated by government. They should treat those rules as a guideline for their survival. Also with some of the incidents coming into limelight, dividing or criticizing others will not help at all in this time. The aim should be to be together and ensure safety by staying at homes.





THE REAL 'MESSIAHS' DURING THIS CRISIS

The crisis that we are in have surely made some our helpers came as real time gods for us. Be it the doctors, the police force, the janitors or our government, all of them can be seen working together for our safety.

The doctors treating patients in the hospitals. The police force on roads to make people abide by the rules formulated. The government officials coming up with relief measures and making this time easy for the citizens. Everyone deserves appreciation for the work they are doing. [These people have been working selflessly just for our safety, from the time of first case of COVID19 reported in India to these complete lockdown hours.](#)

In another report as addressed by our Prime Minister, "Doctors, police personnel and many others have been working very hard and should be encouraged. They should be publicly feted." (The Week, 2020)

The prime function of police as taught to many of us during our childhood was of maintaining the law and order situation in India. This can be seen and witnessed by each and every citizen during this difficult time. On one hand where they can be seen requesting people to stay indoors; at the same time they can be seen penalizing those disrespecting the law. As said by DCP, New Delhi "We are on the roads for your safety. Please stay at home! Police personnel giving flowers to motorists, and requesting them to stay at home. Please support us!"(PTI, 2020).

After the brief guidelines given by government officials, what was expected did not turn out as planned. The streets were expected with a deserted look and people following the orders. The police personnels started of their journey with distributing flowers to the people on roads and asking them to stay indoors. It was not until soon when the situation worsened and they had to take up harsh measures to implement the law. Every Indian state had a different story to tell. Every police personnel took up different way to convince people. From flowers to lathis to situps, every corner of India dealt with the situation differently. Uttar pradesh police wandered in every street of the district and lodged cases against the violators. In order to make people aware, the police resolved to register complaints and deliver the copies of their FIRs at their doorsteps on the first go. But in case the person is seen violating the law for the second time, he/she is arrested for breaching the law. On the other hand in Delhi in order to tackle the situation, soon after Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's orders for 'regime of self isolation', police came up with the idea of 'curfew passes' (The Economic Times, 2020a).

The pass are issued to people rendering essential services and without any private or government identity cards like health, pharmacies, food, ration and other essential assistance.

Some states saw the personnels using humour as an aid to make people aware how their simple act of staying home can save a million lives including their families. Chennai saw police officers wearing helmets designed in the form of coronavirus to enforce the lockdown. Bangalore witnessed the traffice department with tableaus saying ‘the notorious coronavirus is spreading like anything.’ One minute they were seen dancing in the specially designed helmets, the next moment they were seen beating people. Amidst all this, cops also helped in removing the stocks of fake masks and sanitizers from the market. Many DCPs and higher officials roamed on the streets distributing masks and sanitizers to the roadside and poor section of the society. With the joint efforts of the police and various organisations ,the task of providing food to the poor was taken up.

Indian cops have surely been seen playing ‘good cop, bad cop’ during this time !Police did not hesitate to punish people or better to say the lockdown breakers.The lockdown breakers were made to do situps and leapfrogs as a punishment. The police was seen wielding lathis on some rule breakers. Many vegetable sellers and other workers told the similar stories where they were beaten when they were genuinely trying to help with daily groceries. Making billions of people stay at home is not as easy task. Some degree of strictness was required. Therefore their act of resorting to physical violence was met with much criticism.

With the cops taking on to the roads and detaining the violators, the doctors have been working 24*7 to treat the patients and curb the spread of virus.With the spreading of the awareness, we also say doctors calling out to patients to come forward and get tested even if they feel slightest of discomfort regarding their health.

“It is important to reach out to patients who are missing out of treatment because of the stigma and panic. As that it is important to see patients as symbols of hope and victory not stigmatise. It is important to encourage more and more people to get tested, get treated," said Dr Randeep Guleria, AIIMS director (Indian Express, 2020).

The Indian medical force has been rapid in their testings and with the aim of better health of the people as their top priority. Within in a day, the doctors have achieved testing of approximately 45,000 individuals in Delhi and around 82,000 in Mumbai. Even with lack of sufficient equipment to help deal with the crisis, doctors have been working quite hard.

For patients diagnosed with cancers and other serious ailments, doctors have also initiated video conferencing with their patients to look after them. Amidst this lockdown situation, many mental health care officials have taken up the various tasks to ensure people deal with this situation in a positive mindset. But some scenarios were quite disheartening. Some patients have reported cases of being raped during their treatment time. Families of doctors have reported cases of people throwing stones and cursing them during the funeral hours. In some slum areas, doctors were beaten up where they had merely gone to treat the patients.

But what is saddening is that doctors losing their lives because of this pandemic, police personnels beaten up. Despite all their hardwork put in, this is not what they deserve !

In order to protect these assistant, the government of our country came forward to protect them. They formulated guidelines and passed orders which were necessary during this time. With several instructions given, there were a list of laws also stated under which an individual not following the laws could be detained. They could be detained and booked under the Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), IPC section 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) sections. Karnataka government passed an order for three years of imprisonment and additional ₹50,000 in case of any crime or heinous activity against any health worker. The punishment is said to double in case of any damage is done to public as well as private party. The proposed amendments state that the jail term will be three months to five years and fine from ₹50,000 to ₹2,00,000 in case of minor injuries. But if injuries reported are serious, the jail term will be six months to seven years and fine amounts from ₹1, 00,000 to ₹5, 00,000. Also, the investigation in such cases will be completed within one month of the attack.

As per the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar all the helpers will be protected under the common proposed amendments which will include the personnel from ASHA which is Accredited Social Health Activist. Despite protecting their assistants, the government did not take a back step in protecting their citizens. The officials in Tamil Nadu undertook the task of distributing 'kabasura kudineer' which is an herbal concoction trusted to improve the immunity of a person. It was distributed to doctors, police personnel and elder citizens of the states.

A campaign called as 'relief riders' has been started by young generation in Bangalore. This campaign was introduced to deliver groceries and other essential items to the older people

keeping in mind the social distancing and pedalling their ways to reduce pollution. Since old citizens are more prone to this disease, they should stay back at home and relief riders help them in any way they can.

With every hustle to combat this pandemic and break the community transmission, they are appeared as real 'messiahs' in our lives and they deserve utmost respect from all of us. Due to their efforts, India has been able to achieve 19% of recovery rate!



LOCKDOWN: IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF THE DAILY WAGE EARNERS

22nd March 2020, 5 pm, when my entire colony was applauding and appreciating the 'messiahs' working day and night to stop the infection, far away I saw man who was employed at a construction site, going back with his head down and thoughts of surviving through this crisis.

India's daily wage earners have travelled miles from their rural households in hope of better jobs, better income and with dream of giving their family a better living. We see them on a daily basis on construction sites, helpers at grocery stores, rag pickers, security guards or even our house helps who just rely on the wages that they receive may be on daily or monthly basis. They are not the ones who have provisions for sick leaves, pensions or the privilege to work from home like most of us are doing right now.

The spread of the COVID19 and the government measures have turned their lives upside down. The curfew implemented by the officials has stifled these labourers from their source of income. Everybody has been expected to follow the law and stay at home. What concerned most of these labourers were that they will die of hunger before COVID19 affected them. They complained of not having adequate stock of supplies to feed their families.

Since the first phase of lockdown did not talk about much how these poor people will be compensated. Many of them just wanted to leave for their villages. There were large groups of people seen at bus stops and railway stations but they were stranded. The curfew has led to close down of all local bus and railway services. Therefore, as per the reports, large groups of people resorted to walk miles in hope just to reach their home. When interviewed, they told that the pandemic has already left them unemployed and they couldn't find a better place to go. Living in the urban settings and no job would be extremely expensive for them. This is reason they are moving back to their homes where they can at least get food and shelter to survive.

With this act of the labourers, there was not only increase in the number of coronavirus cases in the country but many industries complained about the labour shortages. If the government or for that matter even the companies/industries had given some assurance to these labourers as a helping hand during this crisis, the situation would have not worsened.

With the time of season when wedding season is at its peaks, the flower growers of Himachal Pradesh are also facing a huge loss. The banquets, hotels etc. are closed. The season is usually the peak season for them. But they do not have a single buyer this time causing them huge losses. The mega festival celebrated in Tamil Nadu to worship Lord Kallazhgar has caused losses amounting to huge sums to approx. 200 Arunthaiyar families. These families had put their 3 months of hard work to make water bags from goat hides with each being sold at price ranging from ₹300 to ₹700. The government's announcement of lockdown has largely ignored the lives of these about 100 million workers adding to their hardships triggering the biggest 'forced' reverse migration.

The Quint, in one of their article published about the labourers' view of returning to work when the lockdown is lifted. It did not come as a surprise when they told that they will be trying their luck on the government employment programmes and projects in the village itself rather than going back to their old workplaces that soon. Impact of this was seen with tenfold increase in number of workers under the MNREGA scheme in Rajasthan and Maharashtra. In order to ensure some people are not completely devoid of incomes, MNREGA commissioners in different states came up with the idea of individual works. They have employed 35,000 individuals so far for different works like digging wells, construction of houses under Awaas Yojana etc. Keeping in the mind social distancing individuals will be working and they will be getting their income to help their families during this crisis. Labourers, those employed in urban dwellings will have to face a cut down on their incomes as the economy is on a complete standstill. Lower incomes will not be enough for them to survive in the urban settings.

Some announcements were seen as ray of hope during their dark times. The state governments of many states announced a that certain amount of money will be credited in poor peoples' bank accounts to help them wade through the crisis. While some of the landlords announced to waive off the rents for a month for certain landholdings.

The poor section dwelling in the rural villages who are engaged in farming can also be seen facing the hardships. The outbreak has occurred during the months when winter crops are harvested and the summer crops are sown. With everything at standstill, there is no transportation facility available to sell their crops in markets which has reduced their income. "The unprecedented hardship faced by migrant workers since the outbreak of Covid-19 might result in fear psychosis," said Sujana Hajra, Mumbai-based chief economist at Anand Rathi

Financial Services Ltd predicting a worsening of India's "already precarious employment situation." (Chaudhary and Kotoky, 2020).

Instead of ignoring these people if government would have addressed the matter of providing them with food, shelter as a helping hand, the effects would have been much less than they are now. Thinking as wage earner, the news would have only destroyed one's mental peace and finding to ways survive would have become burdensome. A situation which the country is facing is seen only as economic right now, but what need to be done is looking at labourers' desire and needs so that they return back to their workplaces. The policy makers have to frame policies which complete their aim of economic growth prioritising the way to strengthen the labourers' conditions. Also merely promising a certain sum of rupees to a person will not lessen his worries. What he needs would a job which will act as his source of income for the time.

In this second phase of the lockdown, government has set up a number of centres to look into the issues faced by the workers. But will they be successful in solving the issues of every workers that can only be said in times to come!



COVID19 vs LOCKDOWN: WAS IT AN EFFECTIVE MEASURE FOR INDIA?

With new number of cases increasing on a daily basis, lockdown was the most effective measure that India took up. Staying home can help everyone in staying safe.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE LOCKDOWN

The lockdown was announced under the Disaster Management Act of 2005. Under this Act, the government has the power to lay out the guidelines regarding measures that can be taken to deal with the disaster under Section 10 (2) (1). In order to deal with COVID19 or the coronavirus, the measure that thought out to be beneficial was of social distancing.

Taking the advice of the National Disaster Management Authority, Centre Ministry of Home Affairs issued the order for every city and region to enact the effective measures and take up any new measures as and when the situation arises.

Certain suggestions along with social distancing that were made includes of smooth and continuance of essential services, timings for the shops dealing in daily use goods, groceries to remain open, movement of traffic to be controlled etc..

While some people had a notion that the Centre enforces and enacts the laws of the lockdown, it is not entirely true. Centre can only sanction the laws and measures to be implemented in the union territories under the Act. It is the regional government or the local administration who actually plans on how the lockdown will be executed in their area. Considering the layout as planned by every regional government along with the Central authorities, the lockdown was imposed in India.

HOW WAS THE LOCKDOWN IMPOSED IN INDIA?

India's way of fighting the pandemic may have seemed to be success story for billions with lowest number of cases being reported on a daily basis, but a closer look and looking deeper in to the demographic structure reveals how they curbed the worst health crisis. This was made successful only with the early implementation of the lockdown. If the lockdown had not been imposed at an early stage, the most world's second most- populous country would have ended seeing more graves than any other. With the opinions and consensus of the state officials the lockdown was enacted in all Indian states. The autonomy to choose the effective measures remain within the states and their regional governments.

The race to fight the infection started with testing the international travellers who were first doubted to be the carriers of the infection to the country. With increased number of cases, India resorted to what China did but with more stringent rules. Maharashtra which is known as the financial hub and with most number of infected people till date, shut down services of all its non essential services and the local trains which carry million of commuters everyday. Noida, another place to report quite large number of cases, fixed timings for shops and grocery stores supplying the essential items. Housing societies were also shut with only allowing services of medical or daily groceries to enter. Delhi, the national capital, started with issuing the Janata curfew e-passes for the smooth movement of traffic. Its main objective was to ensure that only those dealing with health services, ration, food supplies and other crucial services are allowed to move out and carry on their work without any trouble.

To ensure people have adequate supplies, the officials also checked with the country's leading e-commerce sites like Big Baskets, Grofers, Amazon etc. for sufficient supplies and implored on them to make sure that only daily use goods and vitals are been supplied with zero contact delivery system. India's measure to stop the spread have been stated as the most harshest in the entire world. The decision to close down the Indian railways and as well as inter state bus services made millions of people looking forward to move back to their homes, stay back wherever they were. As per the World Health Organisation, China shutdown the city of Wuhan, the epicentre of the spread and then other cities which calculated to about 760 million people. But for India, approxiamtely 1.3 billion people have been made to sit back at home, almost double the number of Chinese people.

China showed varying levels of lockdown, with buses running, cabs moved on roads with plastic sheet between driver and commuter, minimum transport was running and migrant workers were transported to their homes. But for India they adopted a uniform policy by making sure the migrant and poor section will get a certain amount of money and ration. India scored 100 on the Stringency Index which was developed by researchers at the University of Oxford.

[HAS IT PROVED TO BE BENEFICIAL?](#)

“Had a lockdown not been imposed, the country would have been staring at 8, 00,000 cases by 15th April”

With the words quoted by the Ministry in accordance with Indian Council of Medical Research, this lockdown has truly been a beneficial step taken by India at a very early stage.

The estimates were done keeping in mind the constant rate of growth, which in recent times has been under control for India. With criticism received from many people, the estimation of figure might not be true but had lockdown not been imposed, the cases would have increased somewhere near to the estimates. With a public health system that can be called sub-par in terms of quality and efficiency, more than half of the population residing in slum areas, most people diagnosed with respiratory problems and no proper testing kits, the lockdown has surely proved to a silver lining for the country.

IS EXTENDING THE LOCKDOWN NECESSARY?

Despite the shutdown, some Indian states saw big jumps in the number of cases of infected people. A country where most of the people reside in slum areas, where social distancing would just be an oxymoron, outbreak of the virus in such areas would worsen the situation. Extending the lockdown with most severe measures is necessary and correct decision taken up by the officials. Along with identifying the high risk zones for the infection to spread, the lockdown measures should also be tightened in such areas. India must race to stop the spread of the infection to survive!





PANDEMIC IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY

Where entire India is struggling and working day and night to stop the spread of the pandemic, the state of Kerala, popularly known as God's Own Country has an entirely different story to tell.

On 30th January 2020, the first case was confirmed in Kerala for COVID19 and today there are 642 confirmed cases with 497 recovered patients as of 20 May 2020 (Live Mint, 2020). It has the lowest mortality rate –among all the Indian states. There have been some noteworthy steps which Kerala took.

Taking a look in the history of Kerala, in 1956 when it was declared as the separate state, it has undergone various public health interventions. The legacy of this public health further boosted by literacy rate and women empowerment lead to 100% vaccination levels in the state. According to World Health Organisation's report of 2005, Kerala has the highest percentage of people imbibing hand washing with soap. The state held the top position among the countries surveyed. So when the fight against the pandemic started Kerala just got back to their age old practice.

Kerala had already fought with such a disease during 2018-19 Nipah virus. By keeping in mind the guidelines and protocols of the Indian Council for Medical Research, Kerala formed a surveillance network and introduced the campaign 'break the chain'. This campaign made people aware of the importance of personal hygiene at this time. They also fixed water taps at entry and exit points of railways stations and bus stands.

The state started its battle by declaring high alert in various districts and undertook the task of transforming the non-functioning hospitals in isolation wards, followed by prisons turning

into special isolation wards. It was not until the month of February the state got the sanction to run medical tests. A helpline was created which covered the every district and village of Kerala. The people of Kerala left no stone unturned to curb its effect.

Where quarantine for international travels was a mandate for 14 days, Kerala was the only state to make it necessary for 28 days. It also made sure proper screening is done at airports. In case any person was left, they could get it done at hospitals. A special team comprising of village people was formed to keep a check on it.

The village committees made sure everybody stayed indoors and worked in close contact with the health department as and when emergency arrived. They also opened community kitchens in various districts keeping in the mind the idea of social distancing which served approx. 400 poor people of the designated area. Each community kitchen employed people from lower class and had some designated areas where they served food. The Kudumbashree Mission, aiming at poverty eradication and empowering women in Kerala were recognised to be frontline workers for working at community kitchens and stitching masks.

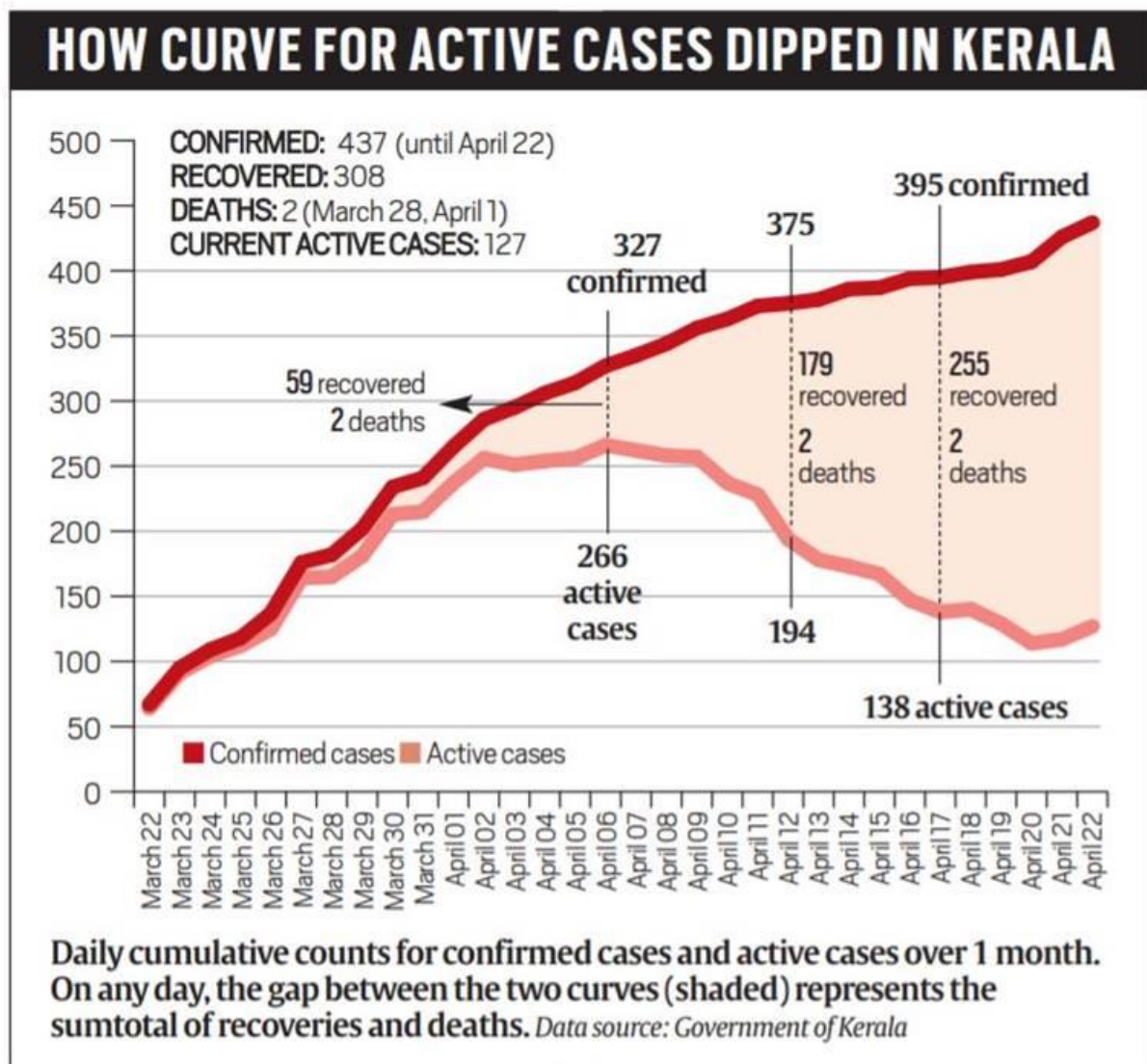
Looking into the lives of daily wage earners where many are now going towards rural employment programmes, this initiative of government has made daily wage earners and labourers earn some wages to support their family. Health minister of Kerala, KK Shailja, also kept the problems of cancer patients in mind. To address this problem, many cancer treatment facilities along with the state of Tamil Nadu and ensured quality treatment given to these patients.

As per the experts what helped the Kerala most was its effective and efficient healthcare system along with a vigilant village community system. This made contract tracing through well designed route maps, outreaching to the community and quarantine of mass population with their consent easy, given the fact that screening and testing was limited due to limited supply of medical kits.

Health care workers have been going on home visits to gather the data and they have also made '41 questions' to collect the information related to the diseases, which are chronic as with the people under home quarantine. Even for the recovered cases, the people quarantined themselves telling that 'just for safety'.

A population of approx. 33 million working collectively and a high literacy rate did help Kerala in some way. But with monsoon season arriving for the state, the diseases like dengue

and influenza can worsen the situation as it shows similar symptoms like COVID19. Kerala still has a battle to fight!



Source: The Hindu

SHOULD RECOVERY OF POOR SECTION BE TOP PRIORITY FOR INDIA?

-Looking at the government's action of implementing lockdown which neglected nearly 100 million people of the society resulted in many problems and created havoc in the country.

Those 100 million people or commonly termed as 'poor section' of the society feared the spread of the virus and took various steps which doubled the rate of the spread of the virus in the society. The sole reason of their act was to reach back safely to their homes, to be with

their family where they will get food and shelter to survive. The curfew implemented by the officials has suffocated these labourers' source of income. There were large groups of people seen at bus stops and railway stations but they were stranded. Large groups of people resorted to walk miles in hope just to reach their home.

Because of this manoeuvre which was simply the act of fear of hunger and not actually of the spread of the infection, the spread of COVID19 took to the rural settings in the country. India, a country where a majority of the population resides in rural areas with some being highly dense, spreading and finding the source of spread of virus would be a really difficult task.

So should the recovery of poor section be top priority at this time? The answer is yes.

Though India has only 2-4% of serious cases which are put on ventilators, they still have a battle to fight in these rural areas. In other words, getting the spread control in these rural areas can be seen as a major battle. The recovery of poor sections of the country is not limited only to curing the infected or tracing the population, it also includes the provision of aid to farmers and creating job opportunities which assures them an income for survival of their family.

The agriculture sector is the most significant contributor to India's economy. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) at the start of the pandemic reported that there will be huge changes seen in the way of demand and supply of agricultural and related goods. This situation can also relate to 'food crisis'. A sector on which almost 1.3 billion people are dependent for their livelihood has been made the top priority for the government through a slew of relief measures. A glimpse of shortage of agricultural and other related goods was seen when announcements of lockdown were imposed and people indulged in 'panic buying'.

Due to the panic buying of the majority of the population, the start of lockdown was witnessed with an increase in the sale of agricultural produce but as the days passed, the sale decline which meant decline in income also could be seen. Another way this problem was seen is with the imposition of the lockdown, transportation sector along with other economic sectors came to a standstill. Due to this, the already existing stock of food supplies could not be carried to markets without the transport system being inactive.

Taking a look at the life of a farmer, the months during which the pandemic started is the season for the harvesting of the existing crops and sowing the summer crops. With pandemic

and high alerts in the country, they got piled up with huge amount. Currently the situation is such that there are huge stocks of agricultural goods but no means to transport. Some relief might have come through the relaxation of rules of lockdown but not completely.

It is not only the supplier or producers of these goods that have suffered, it is the consumers too. Consumers suffered mainly because of the rise in the prices of these agricultural goods. For our economy, the price rise can be linked to the panic buying and supplying bottlenecks.

With labourers moving back to their rural households have been quite disinterested in returning to their workplaces in the cities. This disinterest is because of the fear of lower wages with the same amount of labour hours. Industries employing these labourers are predicted to face labour shortages. What they can do to get them back would require a lot of efforts and convincing power to get the economy back on track.

The government which earlier seemed to ignore these millions of people but has made up with relief measures. Landlords came forward and waived off the rent for minimum of one to three months for various people. Many states employed many individuals for the tasks of digging wells, stitching masks, running the community kitchen etc. to provide them with some level of income. Also with the relief measures the officials should actively look at ways to implement the social distancing and public hygiene in these rural areas.

Even for the state governments which have announced certain sums of money to these poor people, there is a question of how they actually deliver it. Should everybody be entitled to this reward or only some who have rendered their services and are not unemployed? Post lockdown, will the workers be willing to return to these manufacturing facilities or will they shift to other industries maybe with a wage cut?

There are a lot of questions like this to be answered and to answer them the government along with several industries need to frame out a detailed plan to get the economy on track with the recovery of the poor sections being a top priority. It has not lately been realised that to ensure continuous movement of the supply chain to feed the population, to run the economy by any means and make the steps taken to fight the COVID19 a success, the poor section of the society has to be strengthened. If the recovery of the poor section is neglected, it will not at all be a surprise to see these people dig deeper into the vicious circle of poverty and economic growth slipping!



REFERENCES

1. A bear market rally or V-shaped bounce – one trader breaks it down’, CNBC
2. ‘A quick look at RBI’s measures to arrest COVID-19 slowdown’, Business Standard
3. Agence. (2020). Coronavirus in India. South Asia: South China Morning Post.
4. Archana. (2020). Migrant Workers in India May Shun Cities After Lockdown. Delhi : The Quint .
5. Asymptomatic cases on rise in India . Delhi : Economic times .
6. Asymptomatic Covid-19 Cases, Plasma Therapy and a Potential Cure from Indore. New Delhi : News18

7. Baru, Rama V. 2020. “Making the private sector care for public health .” The Hindu. 03 April. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/making-the-private-sector-care-for-public-health/article31241291.ece>.
8. Bennhold, Katrin. 2020. “A German Exception? Why the Country’s Coronavirus Death Rate Is Low.” The New York Times. 6 April. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/04/world/europe/germany-coronavirus-death-rate.html>.
9. Beware! Bear market rallies can surprise you anytime, play safe’, Economic Times, India
10. Coronavirus COVID-19 MERS SARS experts’, Weforum.org
11. Courage, Katherine Harmon. 2020. “The stark differences in countries’ coronavirus death rates, explained.” Vox Media. 22 April. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/2020/4/1/21203198/coronavirus-deaths-us-italy-china-south-korea>.
12. ‘Covid-19 lockdown: Protecting poor means keeping Indian Economy afloat’, epw.in
13. Covid-19: What government, RBI are doing to help revive econ .. New Delhi : Times Of India
14. ‘DBT to construction workers, Govt to spend from Rs. 52000 crore cess fund’, Business Today
15. “Devising a people-centric response to COVID-19 .” The Hindu. 27 March. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/devising-a-people-centric-response-to-covid-19/article31176168.ece>.
16. ‘Delhi HC agrees to hear plea on rising domestic violence, child abuse amid coronavirus, COVID-19 lockdown’, Top Stories Today
17. Doctors call out to people . Delhi : Indian Express.
18. ‘Domestic Violence pandemic Coronavirus’, Yourstory.com
19. DQINDIA. (2020). Should the Coronavirus Lockdown in India be Extended? Yes say Citizens of the Country. Data Quest.
20. ‘Epidemics and stocks a look under the hood’, Investopedia
21. Gayatri. (2020). RBI announces more measures to deal with economic fallout of COVID-19. New Delhi : Economic Times
22. George, Mathew. 2020. “Coronavirus outbreak presents chance for India to strengthen public healthcare system, train grassroots health workers to detect epidemics.” Firstpost. 16 April. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.firstpost.com/health/coronavirus-outbreak-presents-chance-for-india-to->

strengthen-public-healthcare-system-train-grassroots-health-workers-to-detect-epidemics-8265301.html.

23. Global Economy to fall into Recession in 2020', Livemint.com
24. 'How the Indian IT industry can survive the COVID-19 crisis', Deccan Herald
25. How India's coronavirus lockdown is affecting its poorest citizens. The Guardian.
26. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061322>
27. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1060922>
28. <https://indiancaselaws.wordpress.com/2014/08/19/satyabrata-ghose-vs-mugneerambangur-co/>
29. <https://www.bloombergquint.com/coronavirus-outbreak/covid-19-coronavirus-force-majeure-and-impact-on-commercial-contracts>
30. <https://www.legallyindia.com/views/entry/force-majeure-under-indian-contract-law-energy-watchdog-v-cerc-sci>

31. Huggler, Justin. 2020. "What Germany got right in the fight against coronavirus ." The Telegraph. 22 April. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/22/germany-got-right-fight-against-coronavirus/>.
32. 'India has less fiscal room to support economy rise in debt GDP ratio to weaken credit', Economic Times
33. Insider, S. (2020). The environmental impact of COVID-19. MSN News.
34. Intensity of lockdown in India. New Delhi : India Today .
35. Koshy, J. (2020). Without lockdown, India would have seen over 8 lakh cases by April 15. New Delhi : The Hindu.
36. Kurian, Chris Mary. 2020. "How Kerala's People-Centric Health System Built Over 24 Years Is Paying Off Now." Huffpost. 04 April. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.huffingtonpost.in/author/chris-mary-kurian/>.
37. 'Landlords can't take rent from workers for 1 month, says Centre', NDTV
38. Martha. (2020). Will Covid-19 have a lasting impact on the environment? China: BBC.
39. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/>.
40. 'Oil Market Report', IEA
41. Oil Plummet Over 300% To Almost -\$40 A Barrel In Historic Collapse', Forbes
42. Oltermann, Philip. 2020. "Germany's low coronavirus mortality rate intrigues experts ." The Guardian. 22 March. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/22/germany-low-coronavirus-mortality-rate-puzzles-experts>.
43. ohri, N. (2020). Government measures to help . Delhi : The Bloomberg.
44. Output Cut May Not Sustain Oil Price', Economic Times
45. Pallavi. (2020). RBI Announces More Measures To Deal With Covid-19 Crisis. New Delhi : Bloomberg.

46. PM Modi shares 7 Covid-19 lockdown tips for citizens. New Delhi : India Today.
47. Purohit, K. (2020). India COVID-19 lockdown means no food or work for rural poor. Mumbai : Aljazeera
48. 'RBI policy amidst COVID-19 decoding the whatever of whatever it takes', Bloomberg Quint
49. Ripper, R. (2020). COVID-19 is not a silver lining for the climate. New York: UN News .
50. Sawant, E. (2020). Help for senior citizens during COVID-19 lockdown. Bangalore : Citizen Matter
51. Shashwat. (2020). COVID-19 impact: Delhi breathes third week of clean air. New Delhi : Economic Times
52. The covid-19 crisis could bring the economy to digital speed', Livemint.com
53. *The link between lockdown, COVID-19 and Domestic Violence*, Idronline.org
54. Times, E. (2020). COVID 19 affect on the Indian Economy . Delhi .
55. Today, I. (2020). Day 1 of coronavirus lockdown . New Delhi : India Today .
56. Today, I. (2020). Janata Curfew: Delhi cops hand flowers to motorists, request them to stay home. New Delhi: India Today.
57. Umesh. (2020). People will be arrested if they ignore Janta Curfew and argue with cops. Bengaluru: Deccan Herald.
58. Vakasha. (2020). How the Coronavirus Lockdown Was Imposed. India : The Quint .
59. Ward, A. (2020). India's coronavirus lockdown and its looming crisis. The Vox
60. 'What the negative price of oil is telling us', Economic Times
61. World's biggest lockdown may have cost Rs 7-8 lakh crore to Indian economy. New Delhi : Economic Times .
62. Yvonne. (2020). The Unexpected Environmental Consequences of COVID-19. Canada: Voice of Youth.