

4. **Humanity, Vulgarly, Inanity and Politics Thus Reports COVID-19**

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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown as its preventive measure is visible in the finance sector. Its social impact on migration, people's attitude towards migrant workers is not less significant. In fact, it has impacted life at all levels-individual, local, regional, national and international; and all aspects- social, relational, political, economic, religious and cultural. It has interrogated our past decisions and actions through present confusion, uncertainty, inadequacy, and inability to take it head-on, policy shifts, etc. It has placed our present as a challenge to our future. It is said that COVID-19 has pressed a re-start button to set our future in order.

But the present essay is a deviation in that it does not study the impacts on the topics mentioned. It is designed to study people's minds through their actions drawing on selected news reports. The essay is organised under various thematic heads to describe the mind working behind the behaviour. However, it is not a psychological study, but a preliminary understanding of mind underlying behaviour in common people. The themes are not exclusive, instead they are indicative, and a theme underlies more than one behavioural aspect.

Vulgarity and Violence in Mind

A ghastly report was published on 3 April 2020 in several newspapers, both online and print versions. It was reported that five persons, who were attendees of the Tablighi Jamaat conference at Nizamuddin, were quarantined at the isolation ward of MMG District Hospital of Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. The Hospital authority lodged an FIR accusing them of indulging in obscenity and based on the medical staff's complaints, including nurses. It was also reported that they were involved in harassing the women staff.

The five quarantined persons were accused of roaming around semi-naked and harassing female staffers. They are also humming filthy songs and making obscene gestures at the nurses, besides refusing to take the medicines and follow the isolation rules. They used expletives and laughed off the instructions for maintaining social distancing. The said patients also insisted on cigarettes from the housekeeping staff.

A shameless vulgarity was reported when some Tablighi followers were being transported to the hospital. These Tablighis had been to the Markaz headquarters, which was a centre of spreading the corona pandemic. When they were rounded up and taken by bus to Ghaziabad for a medical check-up, they allegedly spat on police personnel and government officials.

A similar gruesome incident was reported in several newspapers and also by the BBC on 2 April, 2020 at Taat Patti Bakhhal area in Indore. The Administration had declared an epicentre following the detection of two COVID-19 cases and 54 families having been put under home isolation. Health department officials of Indore engaged in COVID-19 screening were sent to the area for further screening. On the arrival of the medical team consisting of five health officials, some residents threw abuses and also pelted stones; they also vandalised the barricades put by the police accompanying the medical team. Ultimately the team was forced to stop their screening work and leave the area.

A few days ago, on Monday, a similar incident was reported from the Ranipura area in Indore. The locals had a heated argument followed by spitting on the medical staff that went there to screen them for symptoms.

A previous day (1 April, 2020) report carried a shocking news item in that person owing allegiance to Tablighi Jamaat in Bihar's Madhubani district attacked the police search party when the latter admonished them for defying the ongoing 21-day lockdown. The incident took place late on Tuesday night when a police party went to Girdargunj village in Andhra Dhari block of the district after receiving information about a large gathering in a mosque under the banner Tablighi Jamaat. A heated exchange ensued between the police party and those assembled at the spot, including the participants. The latter clashed with the policemen, stones were pelted, and shots fired. Reports of attacks on doctors and nurses have also come from Hyderabad in Telangana and Surat of Gujarat. A doctor

treating COVID-19 patients in Hyderabad's Gandhi Hospital was attacked on Wednesday by the patients.

In another report of 8 April, it is stated that the locals in a by-lane in Chandan Nagar, Indore started pelting stones at the police when the latter was trying to stop some people from violating the lockdown. Similar incident of stone pelting at Police was reported on 28 April, 2020 at Tikiapara area in Howrah. A police patrol reached Tikiapara, a red zone, after receiving inputs that many people were jostling in a local market on the pretext of shopping, violating the lockdown and social distancing norms. As the police asked them to return home, a mob pelted them with stones and beat them up injuring them severely. Two police vehicles were also damaged in the incident.

Stone pelting also happened in Moradabad of Uttar Pradesh at Nawab Pura colony, as was reported on 15 April 2020. After a COVID-19 patient's death, a team of doctors and other medical staff and a police team went there to take immediate contacts of the dead to a quarantine facility. When the team boarded the ambulance with the patient, a crowd emerged and started throwing stones. The doctors and driver were injured, and the ambulance and the police vehicle were damaged.

In April 20 WWW.Inida.com reported that one of the stone pelters at Taat Patti Bakhal area in Indore who tested positive for COVID-19 and was undergoing treatment in the isolation ward of the medical college, Jabalpur escaped the quarantine centre but later was arrested BBC news on 3 April stated that their neighbours have also ostracised some physicians and their families because of their exposure to patients infected with Covid-19.

Violence in attitude is more harmful than in action, for it is the mind that directs the action. It is harrowing to note the element of violence in fake videos posted in social media invoking communal sentiment. Such doctored videos present negative images reinforcing stereotypes about or nature of one or the other community. What is appalling is that such videos are forwarded, even sometimes with comments of the one who forwards. Incidentally, I know a few of them who belong to the intelligentsia of the country. Incitation, rumours, etc. are nothing but a reflection of the violent mind. These postings do not relate to isolated events but correspond to any particular incident that puts the corona issue at its centre and thus reflects a poisonous communal mind working towards the incitement of violence.

Stupid Arrogance

Human arrogance, stupidity, timidity and other ego appealing qualities get exposed in trying situations. COVID-19 in this sense has been a good indicator of human follies. A few instances are due.

Example is said to be better than precept. We find around us people in power who go on advising, admonishing if their dictates or words are not followed, but they find ways of escape when it comes to them for practice. In this regard, the case of Sub-Collector of Kollam in Kerala is a burning example which shows that government quarantine protocol was violated and many lives were exposed to risks. The Sub-Collector Anupam Mishra was ordered home quarantine on 19 March 2020 for 21 days, but he left the official residence on 18 March, 2020 without informing District Collector or Chief Secretary. Not only that, he misused his status and power and made his security officer and the driver his accomplice in his nefarious plan. The event was reported in several newspapers, including the 27 March 2020 edition of India Today. It was reported that the state government was planning to take disciplinary action against his security officer and driver as they concealed Mishra's travel during the home quarantine period.

The quality of governance depends on integrity, honesty, morality, and unflinching loyalty to the administrator's post. But alas, a personal interest took over his sense of obedience to the law, the safeguard of which is his responsibility. His suspension is a legal action, but not a cure to his nature.

When popularity goes to one's head, arrogance makes one see what it wants to show. And one sees only what pleases one's arrogance. One becomes blind to reality. This happened when Kanika Kapoor, Bollywood singer of Baby Doll fame, avoided quarantine, risked VIPs and her fans' lives, and could not adjust to medical situations.

The news item of 21 March 2020 in NDTV reports that Ms Kapoor was advised 'home quarantine' as she was detected carrying 'high viral load' when she was screened at the Lucknow airport on 14 March. She had visited London from where she returned through Mumbai airport on 9 March. As it is reported, she 'disregarded' the quarantine advice for which two FIRs, one each from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, were filed for negligence and committing acts likely to spread a disease dangerous to life. She has been asked to report at Sarojini Nagar Police Station on April 30 and record her statement. It

is also reported that on 17th and 18th March, she developed symptoms and so got herself tested on 19th March.

Because of her attending parties BJP MP Dushyant Singh, former chief minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje, several other MPs, including Derek O Brien of the TMC and Anupriya Patel of Apna Dal who came contact with her, put themselves under self-isolation. President Ram Nath Kovind also met Dushyant Singh after his contact with Ms. Kapoor. The President has cancelled all his appointments as part of government measures. District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash ordered the closure of Taj Mahal hotel in Lucknow till further orders. Though the official order gave no reason, sources said Kanika had attended a party at the hotel.

But Ms. Kapoor has her version of innocence. Moreover, she has her complaints about food quality, sanitation and treatment with her in the hospital. 'I am being ill-treated here and it feels like I'm in jail. They are behaving as if I am a criminal for no fault of mine,' she said.

If there were no lapses from her side, there would not have been so much commotion and the public; there would not have been FIRs. It seems her status did not expect her to be the carrier of the virus until she became one; then, when she could not escape; she tried to show humility in arrogance.

Once riding the crest of the tide of 'prestige, position and power'; any subsequent life allegedly below it becomes unacceptable instantly. The arrogance that goes with 3 Ps makes one blind to the rationality and reality; and therefore, one adopts any means to hold to the status. They find a way out through the weak point of the system.

Not surprisingly, Wadhawan brothers (Kapil Wadhawan and Dheeraj Wadhawan), who were undergoing interrogation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) connected with Yes Bank case, refused their appearance on the grounds of COVID-19 scare and health issues.

Kapil Wadhawan, according to lawyers, suffers from high blood pressure and had recently been hospitalised in JJ Hospital and Dheeraj Wadhawan is also a heart patient and had undergone an emergency angioplasty in Switzerland in January, 2018. Dheeraj Wadhawan had also suffered from chest pains and was admitted into Hinduja Healthcare hospital. Their mother, aged 70 years, has a multitude of health problems. Thus, two brothers and their mother were highly susceptible to the

coronavirus. Despite that, they travelled from Khandala and Mumbai, where COVID-19 cases were noted, to Mahabaleshwar during the lockdown. On April 9, when the Wadhawan brothers, along with 21 family members and servants, reached Mahabaleshwar, they were detained by police for violating the rules of lockdown (the first lockdown of 21 days was from 25th March to 14 April) and were sent to the quarantine facility.

They had already managed travel permission in writing, but not in a normal process. That is why, the officer who gave the Wadhawans permission to travel during lockdown has been sent on leave and the Maharashtra government has ordered a probe into the matter. This shows how COVID-19 has exposed stupid arrogance and timid confidence. Travel to Mahabaleshwar was full of risk due to the family's health history and the spread of the virus in Mumbai. If health ground was a crucial consideration, then they could have sent the family to Mahabaleswar earlier and appeared the ED investigation before lockdown at least once; for they were summoned by mid-March. It is a stupid logic to refuse appearance before ED on the ground of coronal scare and travel amidst lockdown with highly susceptible persons. It is stupid confidence in that they would avoid infection by flouting lockdown rules.

How power and position make some people arrogant is evident from the misbehaviour of Ms. Chhabirani Sahoo, B.D.O., Baliapla in Balasore district of Odisha. In a video, Ms. Sahoo was seen snapping at the migrant workers from Surat after their arrival. The workers were kept waiting inside the bus for an hour or so near B.D.O office. These migrant workers asked for water and sought to know about arrangements made of them at the local quarantine centres.

But she lost her cool and abused them in an uncivilised manner. A video has surfaced in this connection where she can be seen saying 'Pati Chup Kar' (Shut up), 'To Maa Bapa Tate Sanskar Sikhei Nahanti' (your parents have not taught you manners), 'Byabastha karibaku jadi 5 ghanta time laage tahele bi kharare thiaa heba' (if it will take even 5 hours to arrange, still you will have to stand under the sunlight), 'To Chauda purusha bi ethi chup chap thia hebe' (Even your ancestors of 14 births will stand here without a word), 'Mu Jama Bhala Loka Nuhan' (I am not at all a good human), 'Mu Gotie OAS Officer, To bhalia kouthi jaiki dadan khatuni' (I am an OAS officer, not a migrant bonded labourer like you), 'Aukat Re Raha' (Stay in your limit). She has also abused them as 'outsider'.

This was a big issue in the media and invited public criticism. The people took out a procession demanding her suspension. Ms. Sahoo is reported justifying her behaviour. Whatever may be the provocation, if there was any form Surat returned migrant workers, the words used by the B.D.O. allude to her arrogance associated with position and power or her uncivilised nature.

Stupid pleasure of insensitivity

During pandemic crisis use of social media has increased. Its positive impact is discussed elsewhere in this essay. What is appalling is that it has exposed the crassitude of our so-called rational mind. It is understood when people crack jokes or make light statements in the face of seriousness. This mostly happens in a face-to-face situation, and rarely in a virtual position to reduce tension and create a relaxed atmosphere. It lightens a severe mind. It is done with a positive intention. But what's about when a joke is cracked or information is shared without any intention or with a malicious intention? Such information cause harm to the mind and body. They cause violence in society. Is it not a stupid act of ignorance showing insensitivity of mind? Postings on such themes have proliferated during the COVID-19 crisis. Is it done for an insensitive pleasure or ego satisfaction? Is it done to make simple-minded people fool at the time of a crisis, for a drowning man catches at a straw and take pleasure thinking of its result? Or do people make such postings because their minds cannot go thinking beyond?

What is worrying is that the sense of insensitive and irresponsible stupidity is not limited to those who post. It includes those who believe in it or take it as a means to derive sadistic pleasure by imaging its result. In other words, the group of insensitive stupid has a broader spread as exposed in social media. Among secondary insensitive fools are also 'intellectuals'; both retired and working persons, businessmen, and those who have the skill and mind are negative thoughts. Otherwise, how can they use e-technology to sell make-believe impression, like creating official documents, visual presentation as real? A few examples and their implications, as observed/reported, are due for clarification.

How fake videos are posted is evident from a news report. A Facebook page named 'Modinama' shared the video in Hindi showing Muslims offering namaz on road of Delhi's Patparganj area during the lockdown. Thus they flouted the lockdown rules. Times of India on 14th May,2020 reports that they found the same video uploaded to a YouTube channel that goes by the name 'Sirf News' The caption was, 'Muslims violate social distancing again, now at Patparganj, Delhi.' 'Hundreds of

Muslims offered namaz ... together near a mosque at the Patparganj Industrial Area in east Delhi on 13 May 2020, exposing themselves and others to the risk of contracting the highly infectious coronavirus disease (COVID). Innumerable instances of group prayers have been reported from across India in the course of the nationwide lockdown'.

On verification Times of India group found it to be an old video. The Quint also found the video old, taken before the lockdown was imposed, and shared with a false claim. Many such viral videos in social media target one or the other community having the potentiality of violence and communal disharmony.

On 21st March 2020, I found a viral video in one of the whatsapp groups in which I am also a member. A certain Doctor (the name is withheld) from Nasik has posted a video prescribing sanitisation of hand and washing of face in common saltwater. He also had long prescription dos and don'ts of how to prevent the spread of coronavirus. I was reported one or two weeks later that a few friends developed blisters on face and hands. But the shocking point is that a Professor forwarded it with the caption in Hindi, which can be translated as 'The medicine for Corona is discovered. The discoverer is first Bharatiya Hindu (Sindhi)'. What stupidity! The intellectual mind could not distinguish between prevention (if it is so) and medicine. The claim of a Bharatiya Hindu is insulting to the greatness of Hindu tradition- Basudaiva kutumbakam. This is not the only claim; there were pre-warning claims in Veda and Shaiva Puran about corona. Screenshots of verses were produced. In the name of glorifying the tradition, the persons are bent to defame it!

There were many other suggestions in the name of scientists whether corona was human-made or natural. The posting also claimed a cure of corona. One such viral postings related to Dr. Li Wenliang, the doctor punished for telling the world about coronavirus. The doctor documented that the chemical Methylxanthine, Theobromine and theophylline stimulated compounds are cures for CVOVid-19 infection. The chemical compound is nothing but TEA. So the suggestion was to drink tea as many times as possible to cure corona.

There were also appeals to donate to PM CARES with account details. When the Government brought the account details to the public domain, such appeals stopped being viral, for the details were

different in one or two letters. Many other things like how to recharge mobile during corona without going out, were viral. Unfortunately, many simple, smartphone users have been cheated.

Another viral message dimension was from different countries like Korea (South or North?), Australia, Spain, Wuhan, Italy, etc. The viral messages contained advice of dealing with a corona with the claim that they know how people are treated and how the news is kept secret. Similar messages were viral from Indians who claimed that they got the information from their friends from this or that city of that country. I would like to mention a viral audio message of 30th March, supposedly from Wuhan, by an Indian cloth merchant there. He claimed that Wuhan could control the disease by drinking hot milk, tea and water. They have kept it a secret and giving misleading information. He made the audio secretly for the benefit of Indians and requested to forward it to the Prime Minister and the ICMR.

They could send messages but could not share their 'wisdom' to Indian Consulates or Embassy! How do they try to hold the mind during a crisis with their stupid ploy of gathering 'likes'? This is really a pandemic and more dangerous than COVID-19!

Superstitious vanity

While all the countries, irrespective of their religious tradition have adopted, and all their people have not objected on religious ground, the scientific precautionary measures like social distancing, isolation, etc. to fight against COVID-19, surprisingly Tablighi Jamaati section, particularly in India, found flouting such measures on religious ground. Is it ignorance? Is it a sort of fanatic stupidity of a closed mind? It is apparent that it displays a sense of arrogance, a vanity in thought and a shelter in the name of Allah to hide embedded irrationality. The result of such a practice was obvious, leading to the spread of coronavirus, risking the lives of many and finally death of many infected persons. Reports in newspapers bring to our notice how Maulana Saad convinced his followers that Allah had caused the pandemic, which led them to evading scientific precautions and medical interventions, and in hospitals indulging in violence (discussed elsewhere in this essay).

That COVID-19 is related to divine design is evident in the message of the chief of Tablighi Jamaat Markaz, Maulana Saad. In an audio message, as reported by Munish Chandra Pandey in India Today, in its 2nd April, 2020 edition, Maulana Saad said, 'There is no doubt that sins of human beings are

responsible for this problem [novel coronavirus]. Allah is angry.' He further said, 'If you think you will die if you assemble in a masjid, let me tell you, there is no better place to die.'

Not only that, he is heard addressing the people by saying, 'This is not the time when you leave your prayers, meeting people just because doctors are saying. When Allah has given this disease, then no doctor or medicine can save us.'

This message has gone air and justifies the actions of Tablighis in avoiding quarantine, creating commotion in hospital and gathering in some mosques for namaz. However, his further audio message has done little, at least for some days, among the followers to listen to logic. His statement, contrary to the first which comes after his absconding since 28 March and hot pursuit of Delhi Police, reads, 'People should follow doctors' guidelines and advise. I am in isolation, and people should follow the instructions. But the damage has already been done. A report of Times of India, in its 5 April, 2020 reveals that as many as 1,023 Covid-19 positive cases found in 17 states have been traced to the Tablighi Jamaat accounting for 30% of all cases in India. A 16th April report of Business Today states that in Tamil Nadu, at least 50 people who participated in the event have tested positive for coronavirus, followed by 24 in Delhi and 32 in Telangana. Six coronavirus deaths in Telangana have also been linked to the event.

Defying Lockdown by Tablighi Jamaatis became a concern in different states of the country, leading to their arrests. The outlook of 6th May edition reports arrest of 13 Tablighi Jamaat Members. Defiance, violence, case and arrests also have been reported in different parts of the country when people defying lockdown offered namaz. The Hindu of 12 May says that the police registered a case against 125 residents of Dongri after they allegedly violated the lockdown by offering janaza namaz (prayers offered for the soul of the departed) in the middle of the street last week. The arrest of 7 people by Noida Police was also reported because a group of 20-25 people gathered at a masjid in Karaunda village on 10th April, as reported in Times Now News, for namaz in a clear violation of lockdown directives. In Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district, 40 people, including the sarpanch, were booked for namaz gathering, as was reported on 10th April in Times new Bureau. But in Karnataka, police intervention was met with violence. Stones were pelted on policemen after they tried to stop people from offering namaz in Karnataka's Hubballi. A similar incidence took place in

Kannauj district of Uttar Pradesh. An unruly mob attacked and pelted stones on cops after the police tried to stop a group namaaz.

Violation of lockdown rules is attributed to Maulana Saad's initial messages. That there is something personal and irrational, rather than religious in Maulana Saad's conduct, is evident from the write up of Faizan Mustafa on 16th April, 2020 in The Wire. He writes,

'The entire Muslim world, including fundamentalist Saudi Arabia, had prohibited prayers in mosques. At a time when even the Mecca and Medina mosques had been closed to the public, Maulana Saad preferred to go against saner voices. Subsequently, after the closure of the Nizamuddin mosque, he himself advised TJ followers to stay home. In doing so, he contradicted himself as in his earlier speeches, he had ridiculed the social distancing advisory.

By going against the Sunna of the Prophet (sayings and actions of the Prophet), he has also gone against the Quran, which clearly says the best example for the Muslims is the Prophet himself. In unnecessarily risking his followers and other human beings' lives, he has lost the right to lead his group unless he seeks God's repentance after admitting his mistakes and his followers yet again repose faith in him. Of course, he never intended any harm to anyone and therefore his followers may eventually forgive him'.

Moral Decadence

Quest for material opulence divides humanity into two groups: one who seeks to fulfil the material desire and the other seeking satiating of the former's desire. The more intense is the desire, the greater is the departure from human values, i.e. moral decadence, which leads to cheating, corruption, and adoption of all types of iniquitous practices and fraudulent means to extract the most from 'the sought after group'. The impact of COVID-19 is seen how a section of the humanity has been involved in making money from the other section through fraudulent means by taking advantage of the crisis. The section is seen fishing in troubled waters. Corruption strives during such situations, for moral decadence takes any form.

This paper focuses primarily on duplicate items, issues of kickbacks, and price increase in everyday items during COVID-19 crisis.

Apparent life-saving items turn to be life-killing tools. People use them, not knowing that they expose to the risk as it would happen without using them. Newspaper reports expose such practices of moral decadency during COVID-19. A few cases are presented here.

An allegation of corruption by the Congress party was reported in Hindustan Times on 27th April, 2020. The party drew the Government's attention on the matter of 150% profits from sale of rapid test kits for COVID-19 to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Such an irregularity was reported in mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com on 12th May. Possible kickbacks were alleged against BMC, Mumbai in the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE). The BMC paid for a full PPE unit more than the cost of the individual items that make it up. It paid Rs.85 extra for a PPE kit that came with a three-ply mask and Rs. 207 extra for the one that contained an N-95 mask. The amount looks insignificant, but it matters given that the BMC used to buy 5000 PPE kits every day.

From PTI source, it was reported on 6th June, 2020, that nine IAS officers relieved from COVID-19 duty in Odisha as the opposition party labelled corruption allegation in management and purchase of medical equipment and protective gear against the coronavirus. However, the Government not only justified the activities of the IAS officers, but their release from duty was considered to give a chance to new officers. A question arises: why not replace those against whom there was no corruption charge?

The above three examples are indicative of the practices prevailing during COVID-19 crisis. Added to it are instances of a rise in the average price of articles of necessary goods. On its 29th April edition, the Financial Express reported an increase of nearly 6% for several purchases. It reported a rise over 3.5% for most edible oils, 15% for potato and 28% for tomato. The price of Arhar dal in the national capital rose from Rs.93 to Rs. 106 as on 28/4. The price of Gram dal rose from Rs. 72 to Rs. 86, Massor dal from Rs.71 to Rs.81, Mustard oil from Rs. 124 to Rs. 132 and Soya oil from Rs.111 to Rs.121. The prices of common food items such as rice, wheat also increased significantly.

Profiteers' moral decadency is not confined to one place or the other. It is a pandemic like coronavirus. We have information of whatever is reported. But there are villages and rural towns, and other unreported places where the condition is deplorable. However, the reported ones are not less

significant, as price rise happens in a metropolis like Delhi, Chennai where people are supposed to have awareness and where the government seat is located.

The New Indian Express reported in its 29th June edition price rise when the Tamil Nadu government extended lockdown further till 31st July. Tomato, which was sold for Rs 20 sold for Rs 45 to Rs.50 in the retail market after the lockdown announcement from Monday, 30th June. The wholesale price of garlic increased to Rs.300 per kg and beans to Rs. 130 per kg.at Thirumazhaisai. Potato, which was sold at Rs. 35 sold for Rs.50 to Rs.55, the bunch of coriander leaves, which was sold at Rs. 10 sold at Rs. 35 in Alandur market after the announcement of the extension of lockdown. News18.com in its 29th June edition, reported that in Guwahati prices of potato rose to Rs. 80 for a kg. from around Rs. 25, cucumber to Rs. 100 and tomato to Rs. 150.

The report shows moral decadency, for unscrupulous elements take the crisis to their advantage and charge high prices. They are playing with the trust of panic buyers by supplying spurious items and killing the latter to make a profit. There are examples of police foiling such bids. India Today, in its 15th March edition, reported that a District Administration team sealed an unlicensed unit in Noida's Sector 63 where spurious hand sanitizers were being packaged in bottles. How quick is an immoral mind! Just 24 hours before, on 13th March, Friday, the Central Government had notified that face masks and hand sanitizers were essential commodities to fight against COVID-19. And after 24 hours the evil people were ready with spurious items!

The Avenue Mail reported on 19th March that fake hand sanitizers' racket was busted in Jamshedpur's Burmamines and Jugsalai areas. The next day on 20th March, Times of India reported a raid in Bengaluru. Central Crime Branch busted manufacturing of duplicate sanitizers and hand rubs in Bengaluru's Newtaragupet and Kasturibanagar. On 18th March Hashtag Mumbai News also reported such raid of authority in Mumbai. On 11 May Jagaran reported the authority again busted a racket involved in manufacturing spurious sanitizer items in Govind Mitra Road of Patna.

It is not always a quest for material gain, but insensitive and irresponsible behaviour, like creating and spreading rumour, also points to moral decadence. For example, rumours/fake news is such invisible weapons that are more fatal and dangerous to affect the mind and directing actions. Physical weapon injures or kills individuals, but rumours do more harm to individuals and society both at present and

in future if it is flared up continues. Rumours kill reasoning, which distinguishes human beings from other species. They are lethal weapons that affect the morale of the people. We have to face two challenges during a pandemic: the pandemic itself and an avalanche of false news about the virus on digital platforms. No information is always better than misinformation. The latter gives a free run to criminals, miscreants, and other motivated actors; it exposes us to 'information disorder' where it is challenging to disambiguate truth from falsehood.

The Indian Express in its 9th May edition, reported that 35% false, misleading information comes through videos. A write up by Niranjana Sahoo 13th May (orfonline.com)

states:

'According to a recent report by the fact checking website BOOM, COVID-19 related fake news which began climbing in the third week of March took a massive spike in early April, particularly after the Tablighi Jamaat incident in Delhi. Out of 178 fact checks the website conducted since the onset of COVID-19 in the country, as much as 35% of them were fake videos, 29% images and a similar percentage were doctored messages on range of issues such as fake diagnosis and treatment, falsified quotes by celebrities with their photos, false notifications and lockdown guidelines among other'.

Two examples, as reported on 9th May in the Economic Times, are cited to reveal iniquitous mind operating during a pandemic:

It was reported that Maharashtra police have registered by 9th May as many as 51 cases against various individuals spreading fake news, rumours and false or fraudulent claims concerning the pandemic. In one specific case, a newspaper advertisement dated March 13, by the owner of Mattress Company, claimed that the mattresses could cure Covid-19. In Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow a fake Godman Ahmad Siddiqui calling himself as "Corona Wale Baba" claimed that those who could not wear a mask could use the talisman to keep corona away.

Perilous Innocence

Cases of escape from quarantine centres are a great concern for the authority. Quarantine is simply a preventive measure against spread of COVID-19 cases in the absence of clinical cure. The measure is for the immediate safety of the individual concerned and his/her family members. What makes the people to escape quarantine? Are they too innocent to gauge the result of such behaviour? Do they not

understand the meaning of quarantine? Why do they avoid quarantine? Is there any fear? Whatever may be the reason of avoidance of or escape from quarantine centre, but the incident is not a good taste of understanding the severity of the associated problem. However, escape by general people shall be distinguished from the escape of the followers of Tablighi Jamaat because the latter objected quarantine from the beginning. A few examples of escape and trouble in quarantine centres are cited.

A news item of 13th June, 2020 reports a dangerous incident that took place in Mazbat, Udalguri in BTR Assam. According to the report the inmates of Mazbat University Quarantine centre; burnt beds and damaged property. It was further reported that fear among the inmates after two/three people were found from them to be corona positive caused the incident. People created unruly situation for not allowing them to go home after inmates tested COVID-19 positive. Lack of awareness about how to behave under such situation was the cause of panic and reaction.

A similar case of awareness problem was reported in Ranchi on 17th June 2020. Parents of a one-and-a-half-year-old child, who tested positive for Covid-19, fled the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) with their child. The child was brought to RIMS from Dhanbad due to some urinary infection as per the version of doctors. But test confirmed positive for Covid-19 and so the child was shifted to the isolation ward. As it is reported parents of the infected child took the step fearing that their child might not be treated well in an isolation ward and may contract more infections.

Another incident of commotion was reported at Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial Hospital (JLNMH), Rainawari, Jammu and Kashmir on 28th March, 2020. About 26 people, including 14 women and 12 men, of this facility centre created uproar, broke down window panes, doors of the hospital and fled. These people from congested Chattabal and Batamaloo areas of Srinagar were primary contacts of the person from Chattabal area who tested COVID-19 positive. Escapees blamed unsatisfactory hospital facility as the reason of their reaction. A news report of 31st March 2020 reveals escape from Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Science (SKIMS), Chest Disease (CD) Hospital and other quarantine facilities at Srinagar. The reason of escape is attributed to bad facilities in the hospital, mixing up of 'suspect' cases with 'confirmed cases', roaming of dogs in hospitals and sometimes their attack of the patients.

Lack of basic facilities is also reported on 3rd May 2020 as the cause of escape of Surat returnee Odia migrants from the quarantine centres and creating commotion. More than 150 migrants from quarantine centres at Janata High School in Beguniapada and Adarsha Vidyalaya at Ragapur in Ganjam districts were reportedly fled the facility centres. A news item of 24th April states that thousands of people in overcrowded COVID-19 quarantine centres in government buildings across the country and the officials complained of poor food and sanitation and lack of physical distancing. Unsurprisingly, as in most of the cases, 25 youths quarantined in a school in Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh state, clashed with staff over poor conditions and then escaped through a window. A Home Ministry official said there had been reports of 27 clashes in quarantine centres since April 16. The official attributed the reasons of escape and commotion to 'people getting angry' due to mounting frustration and anxiety. The anger obviously resulted from inadequate facilities. Mismanagement, for example, like stale food, dirty toilets and shortage of bed linen in Rae Bareilly, a quarantine centre in Uttar Pradesh is also evident from videos released by frontline medical staff. Shortage of toilet has been a big problem. A Kolkata news item reports how a tailor, Ishita Debnath had to share two toilets with 80 women. However, lack of facilities or mismanagement is not the only factor of disturbance at facility centres, there are reports of people trying to steal items and abusing the staff.

The incident in Manipur, as reported on 12th June 2020, has a different taste. The two youth of Manipur Tamenglong quarantine centre escaped the facility to meet their girlfriends. But they returned after some time and brought with them alcohol, cigarettes and ganja. The duo sold the liquor, cigarettes and ganja to other inmates at the quarantine centre. It was only after an official at the quarantine facility caught them distributing the alcohol and cigarettes, the story of their escape-and-return was known.

There is another dimension of avoiding quarantine centres. The migrant workers were reported either jumping off running trains or getting down by pulling chain much before the station. In some cases, they jumped off as the train did not stop in a previous station. It should be mentioned that Shramik Special trains had scheduled destinations.

There are many such examples. The Statesman in its edition of 20th June 2020 reported that eight migrant workers returning home in North Dinajpur pulled the emergency chain and jumped off running Shramik Special train at the Belakoba railway station in Jalpaiguri district as the Railway

Protection Force (RPF) did not allow them to get down at Kishanganj as the train was scheduled to go to Assam. Times Now Digital reported on 14th May, 2020 that more than 50 migrant labourers coming from Maharashtra in the Shramik express scheduled to Bihar's Bhagalpur got down by pulling the emergency chain near Hajipur in Bihar.

A report in Hindustan Times on 26th May 2020 migrant workers from Delhi's Anand Vihar to Purnia de-boarded the train near the Ranibagh railway crossing and escaped. Similarly as many as 350 migrants returning from Delhi and Patiala jumped off Shramik Special trains by pulling alarm chains in two separate incidents between Mansi-Saharsa rail sections near Simri-Bakhtiarapur station. In a similar incident, migrants workers coming from Chandigarh stopped another train headed towards Gaya near Mahdi Ganj village in Sasaram district. They de-boarded the train and ran away to their destinations instead of going to the quarantine centre.

The Hindustan Times reported on 10th May 2020 that about 20 migrant workers returning from Ahmedabad on a Shramik Special train to Odisha got down from the train by pulling the chain near Majhika in Angul district hours before they were to be quarantined. It was also reported that some of the migrants in Bhadrak district coming in a bus from Surat got down several kilometres ahead of the quarantine centre and gone straight to their homes.

The 3rd June, 2020 edition of NDTV reports the incident of chain pulling and escape of migrant workers near Hojai railway station who were coming from Mumbai to Dibrugarh in a Shramik special train.

In another incident, as is reported in 23rd May 2020 edition of Hindustan Times, 400 workers of Ganjam from Namburu in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh got down from a Shramik Special train scheduled for Bhadrak, at the railway station near Chilika lake in a bid to escape compulsory quarantine in their respective panchayats.

The life belongs to the workers and their family members who were likely to be infected because of their fleeing from quarantine centres or avoiding quarantine by escaping en route. Is it innocence or ignorance? However, its result is definitely perilous.

Politics sans Logic and Feelings

Politics without values, logic and feelings is more dangerous than rumours. It divides people into compartments, keeps people in fool's paradise, drains out mind to think, does not promote independent thinking and reduces people to the status of blind followers of stupidity of the leaders. Rumour has no known source, but politics operates around a leader or few leaders at the centre. COVID-19 has exposed how unconcerned is politics to the sufferings of the mass which it rides on. There are numerous examples of iniquitous politics as exposed during pandemic; but a few examples are enough to tell tales about its nature.

It is reported in news papers and channels that in the BJP ruling states the Congress blame the government on failure to control COVID-19. Similar blame is labelled by the BJP on states with non-BJP governments. Ironically the situation is not different under both the governments. From the blame game it is not clear whether the cause of failure lies in the ideology of the party forming the government or 'somewhere else'. The 'somewhere else' is buried under the criticism of the government with politics at the centre. Such mudslinging blinds us to examine the reason of similar problems irrespective of who forms the government. Politics provides the mass a prism to look thorough, and thereby the reality escape attention, and the problems persist.

Ronojoy Sen's write up in Wire on 11th May gives an idea of politics. In India health comes under the purview of the states. However, the Centre has used the National Disaster Management Act to impose a nationwide lockdown from March 24. 'While most state governments have toed the Central line, some have been pulled up for deviating. Indeed, opposition-ruled states like West Bengal ... have been singled out for criticism... Some states, on the other hand, have criticised the Centre for prohibiting the sale of liquor, one of the biggest sources of revenue, during the lockdown's first phase'.

From a report of News18 in its 12th April edition the politics between the Centre and West Bengal is evident. The Centre accused West Bengal Government of 'gradual dilution' of the curbs and Mamata Banerjee retorted in the intensity.

The Centred accused that there was no regulation in vegetable, fish and mutton markets in many areas, including Rajabazaar, Narkel Danga, Topsia, Metiaburz, Gardenreach, Ikbapur and Maniktala,

where social-distancing norms were violated. The state BJP unit has repeatedly alleged that in minority-dominated areas lockdown was not properly enforced. Obviously, communal side is obvious.

Commenting on the Centre's observations, Banerjee retorted:

"We are not fighting any communal virus, we are fighting a disease spreading through human contact. Wherever we find any problem, steps will be taken to ensure that the lockdown is imposed there, but that doesn't mean shops would remain closed... We are keeping a close watch."

The ridiculous part of the politics exposed during corona is the way credit was given to Rahul Gandhi for his role in controlling COVID-19 in Bhilwara of Rajasthan. The Print in its 10th April issue reports Sonia Gandhi's statement: 'The fact that over 22 lakh people were screened in Bhilwara is phenomenal and this could only be achieved as the state paid heed to Rahul Gandhi's warning and planned accordingly by putting in place adequate isolation wards, quarantine centres, ventilators, masks, sanitisers etc.'

Who will then take the blame for the uncontrolled situation in other districts of Congress ruling Rajasthan and later of Chhattisgarh? Of course she credited Rahul Gandhi for low incidences in Chhattisgarh during that time. During that time Odisha and Jharkhand had registered low incidences. Sikkim and some North-eastern states even registered nil cases. How will take credit for these states? Why his warning did not work in the whole of Rajasthan? What a stupidity? What a childish, immatured and short-sighted illogical statement? Who will take blame for rising cases in Chhattisgarh thereafter?

Politics is such a demon that strives on negativity and sees everywhere a vested interest even where there is none. It is easy to find fault with others' works by those who never work! Sanjay Raut's criticism of Sonu Sood for his work among the migrant workers as 'enacting a political script written by BJP' is such an example, for a negative mind only sees everything negative. That's why as is reported in the New Inida Express on its 9th June edition, he was stopped outside the Bandra Terminus by police from meeting labourers. In everything the conditioned mind of the self reflects.

Bus politics in Uttar Pradesh is another example of politicians' deceptive Good Samaritan incarnation. People's suffering does not matter, but what matters is how to maximise political mileage even riding the dead bodies of the mass. The migrant workers- men, women, sick, children, old persons- walking thousands of kilometres by foot became the platform to play politics by the Congress with a letter of Party General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath offering to provide 1,000 buses to transport migrants back home. It was a different thing that some of the buses were two wheelers and four wheelers. it was a different thing that the government had not thought of or made any such alternative practically to help transport of the workers. The Congress ways of (mis) management and the government's bureaucratic ways of queries and instructions were all that got primacy, not commitment to people's needs.

The politics is clearly obvious from the sequence of events that followed the letter of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Scroll.in in its 3rd July edition reports:

'The Uttar Pradesh government initially ignored the offer. Accepting Gandhi's offer would, of course, be an admission by the BJP-run Adityanath government that it lacked capacity to deal with the crisis. However, as the migrant issue kept attracting more and more public attention, the Uttar Pradesh government relented on Monday.

It was a tactical retreat.

At first, the Adityanath government asked the Congress to send the buses to Lucknow – a request that the Congress protested was absurd. It made little sense for empty buses from Delhi and Rajasthan to travel halfway across Uttar Pradesh to Lucknow when they could have been used to transport migrants living in the National Capital Region.

Uttar Pradesh relented, requesting the Congress to hand over buses to the district magistrates of Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar (both districts that abut Delhi). However, there were twists even then: the Congress alleged that some of its buses were intentionally stopped at the Rajasthan-Uttar Pradesh border, sabotaging its attempt to get the buses to Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar.

The Uttar Pradesh government fired even more salvos. It alleged that that about 100 vehicles on the Congress list were not buses (but were cars or other kinds of transport). It added that 297 buses lacked either fitness certificates or valid insurance papers'.

Rahul Gandhi's meeting with a migrant female worker also holds politics at the centre, for this was the stupid way of publicising the woes of the workers which already had drawn the attention of the nation. How did the media coverage of the interview of Raul Gandhi with the lone female worker help in mitigating their sufferings? Were not there other workers? How was she representative of workers with diverse problems? The lonely case of interview incited the BJP to produce proof that the event was stage managed. The energy and time put by the BJP to expose Rahul Gandhi's alleged ploy could have been meaningfully used to plan for the workers. But politics prevailed over the concern for the people.

India Today, on 21st May reported that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi met several migrant workers at Delhi's Sukhdev Vihar. Soon after, a set of two pictures went viral on Facebook and WhatsApp with the claim that the entire interaction was staged. While one of the pictures showed a woman in a green saree and white scarf listening to Gandhi speaking, the other showed her in a car sitting next to a man in olive green shirt and black mask. The viral claim said that the woman was brought in a car for the "photo-op". To this the Congress had its tirade ready. Congress volunteers retorted that the woman seen in car arranged was at the time of her returning home in vehicles arranged by Congress Volunteers.

Uncertainty, Bravery and Sense of Insecurity

One of the unpredicted events that occurred during lockdown is reverse migration and untold miseries of these workers who preferred to walk home than to stay back in work places. Their intense desire to return home was seen when they gathered at the railway and bus stations even at the rumours of train/bus services to be provided. With a little more intensity people travelled on two wheelers including bicycles. Those who did not have such facilities walked on foot which included kids, women (a few pregnant), sick and old persons with bag and baggage. Those who had a little money hired container trucks. They braved all the troubles on the way - starvation, sickness, death of some and delivery of child and did not stop walking hundreds of kilometres from Mumbai, Kolkata,

Haryana, Delhi, Gujarat, etc. to reach their home in Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Tripura, Chhattisgarh, and other states. A few who could not travel due to one reason or the other committed suicide.

India Today, 5th May, 2020 reports that a pregnant woman after travelling 70 kms along NH 44 gave birth to a child at the Japthi Shivanur village of Narsingi Mandal. The woman was travelling due to the national Covid-19 lockdown with her family from the Sangareddy district in Telangana to her native village Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh by foot was forced to deliver her child on the road. In another incident as it is reported in Inida.com on 13th May, 2020 a women was forced to give birth on road side when she was travelling on foot from Nashik in Maharashtra to Satna in Madhya Pradesh due to the coronavirus lockdown. What's more harrowing is the fact that just after two hours after her delivery, she walked another 150 km, before she could find any help. A similar incident happened on Sunday when a woman migrant was forced to give birth under a roadside tree in Uttar Pradesh's Lalitpur district after having covered a distance of 500 kilometers on foot. PTI reports on 2th May, 2020 that a woman called Bindia, who walked over 100 km from Ludhiana in Punjab, delivered a girl child after reaching Ambala in Haryana but the baby died shortly after birth. She was lucky enough to give birth in a hospital, but unlucky to loss the child.

A write up in Down to Earth states on 22nd May 2020 that on 16th May migrant woman worker was walking back to her village in Maharashtra's Akola district from Jharkhand. After covering around 250 kms the woman delivered a child on the roadside, right at the gate of a hospital at Birsa Block. She then abandoned him to be able to catch up with the others on the long walk home amid the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Hindustan Times reported on 11th May 2020 that a 24-year-old resident of Domkal allegedly hanged himself in Kerala. He used to work in a brick kiln. His mother said, "My son was depressed as he could not buy a ticket to board the special train that came to Murshidabad". Matrubhumi reports on 24th June, 2020 another case of suicide due to lockdown. A Malayali, named T. Bineesh had bought ticket in a bus to return Vada kara Mudappilavu, his native place in Kerala. He was working in Chennai. It is learnt he received a phone call asking him not to return as Chennai is a COVID-19 hotspot while he was getting ready and he looked irritated after this. He committed suicide after the bus to Kerala left. His suicide note states, 'My death is a protest of an expat...'

There was other death during reverse migration whether on foot or other means. Scroll. in, in its 29th March 2020 edition, records death of at least 22 migrants while trying to get home during lockdown. One man suffered a heart attack while walking along the Agra highway. Some others, including children, were killed in road accidents. Death due to accident of buses carrying migrant workers has also been reported.

The workers had no work at their working place; they were not sure of any work and income at home; there was uncertainty everywhere for them; still they preferred to reach home. The closure of essential services has made it impossible for the daily wagers to live in the rented shanties of big cities. The pitiable condition is evident from the words of migrant worker as is reported in livemint on 26th March 2020. 'We will not die of corona but hunger,' said Verma. "I came to Noida two years ago from Bundelkhand in search of a better life. But for the last one week, we are without work, without enough ration and whatever we had saved is almost over," said Verma, a father of two.

So, they choose home return as best option. Business Standard reports on 1st April 2020, citing Central Government source, that 500,000-600,000 migrants reached their villages on foot during the lockdown, even as all policy measures were in place to take care of their needs. Workers' reverse migration raises many questions. Apparently why did they take such bold steps of walking home? At least they had a shelter where they lived while working. Was it temporary like the jobs? They had a social network through their interaction with neighbouring people including shopkeepers. Was this network unsustainable during lockdown? What was the role of employers towards employees during such a crisis? Was not there any preparation for it? What was the government' arrangement when their normal life ways were intervened? Could not the government anticipate the problem? Was workers' income only at subsistence level so that they could not generate any surplus to meet unforeseen problems of few months? Were they apprehensive of the uncertainty about the period of lockdown? Did they feel a sense of security at home even if they remained unemployed?

Obviously, the situation was terrifying. The people were confused, helpless and non to turn up for right advice and information. Perhaps the political parties, who have their network of ground level workers and who know through them how many votes they would get from a family could have been a proper channel to anticipate and deal with worker's problem. Even the government machinery has its spread with grass root workers in the field of health, education, agriculture. The local self-

government through its organisational set up has door to door contact. All these could have been mobilised to reach the workers who were in trauma and took bold step of braving everything that come on their way of travelling home.

Looking at the workers, they lost their jobs and regular earning. They did not have any hope of getting work at home, for they had left home as they did not get work. Still they preferred to brave all the troubles to reach home. An interview of a few workers revealed that they were afraid of corona infected death with no kith and kin at funeral. They were aware of less corona cases in their respective states like Odisha, Tripura, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, etc. in comparison to the places where they worked. Death in work place during COVID-19 crisis created an unknown fear among them. There was a sense of loneliness even in some workers' families. They were not in the habit of isolated life though living in the society. Joblessness, future uncertainty, a sense of fear, unaccustomed life and a sort of perceived assurance with family members in the village worked together. The assurance was enough to influence their decision to walk home. In this regard remark of a reverse migrant published in NewsClick on 8th May, 2020 is expressive:

‘No matter what, I am not going to return. I have seen the worst. I have been walking for the last two weeks and there is no one to listen to the plight of people like us. I do not own anything in my village, not even farmland, and I will find a way to feed my family. But, I will not return to the city at any cost’.

But the Government has its version as is reported in Business Standard on 1st April,2020:

‘Unfortunately, due to some fake and or misleading news or social media messages, a panic was created’.

Job, Work and Service Mentality

A Managing Director (MD) of a certain Company usually asks a question to every candidate when an interview is conducted against a post. The question is: Do you want a ‘job’ or ‘work’? To the MD, the job gives position and assured salary; ‘work’ also gives what the ‘job’ gives, but the person interested in ‘work’ ensures involvement, commitment and a sense of belonging to the Company, rarely to be found in persons interested in job. Obviously, the MD tries to penetrate into the mind of the candidate.

COVID-19 has also exposed the officers who do work and who do the job. We will discuss two/three cases of officers who were doing works.

Before citing the cases a brief explanation about 'job' is useful. A job corresponds to a position. But there are other ways of gaining a position also. The best example is a Minister or a Captain in a cricket team. These positions are not defined on the basis of formal qualifications those make a candidate eligible for a job. But all the positions have the potentiality of being properly used or misused depending on the mentality of the position holder. We read in news papers instances of misuse of power for selfish ends like issue of license, permission, etc. for a bribe. There are several instances of scandals against the name of persons on top positions. Contrarily, there are also instances where such positions are used, beyond the domain of the job for the general benefit of the public.

Such a case is reported in most of the news papers in Odisha. It is also making round in social media. The Block Development Officer (B.D.O.) of Kujnag in Jagatsinghpur District of Odisha, Dr. Pooja Lenka not only did her job - discharged her duties as B.D.O., but really committed in heart and soul to fight against COVID-19. In her involvement, both her position (as B.D.O.) and individual attitude worked together for which her work has earned panegyric not only in media and public, but also from the Administration. The State Relief Commissioner (SRC), Government of Odisha and the Collector/Magistrate of Jagatsinghpur District have put her achievements on records. The SRC records, "hard work" and dedication that instilled faith in people". In an appreciation letter, he writes, "at this crisis hours, officers like you lead by example and prove why we are here". Several Societies and People's organisations like Road Safety Forum, Odisha; Asiana Charitable Trust, Kujang; Shri Ram Gyan Mandir, Kujang, etc. have conferred 'Corona Warrior' Award on Dr. Lenka.

Beyond the jurisdiction of her official duty, she devoted her off time, while at home or in the villages of her relatives, to create awareness among the people, particularly children. She educated village children on social distancing, and how to follow it in different contexts. She took personal interest to distribute masks, food, and arrange proper quarantine of reverse migrant workers. This extra work alludes to her humanitarian consideration, her attitude of service and thus to her feelings for humanity. She worked in the post and served the people as an individual.

Work, not the job is noticed during the fight against the COVID-19 in Dharavi and Bhilwara. The success has brought in the epithets like Dharavi model and Bhilwara model. When thousands of people in overcrowded coronavirus quarantine centres in government buildings across India are complaining of poor food and sanitation and lack of social distancing, what is it that made the fight effective in these two places? It is officer's sense of responsibility, commitment to work that made the distinction. The sincerity and commitment to the purpose introduced a series of innovative experiments — bringing in private practitioners, isolating vulnerable populations, getting large quarantine facilities and taking over private hospitals for treatment — that seemed to have done the trick. This was apparently absent in the works of officers in other places for they only did their job.

Dharavi was a place where social distancing and lockdown, the twin strategies that are largely regarded as the only effective ways to counter coronavirus in the absence of treatment or a vaccine was not a viable strategy. Kiran Dighavkar, Assistant Municipal Commissioner, in-charge of Dharavi was aware of the problem. Houses were small, 10×12 feet, but sheltered large families of seven to eight members. Undoubtedly, transmission through the community was inevitable. So his team carried out rigorous contact tracing, testing and quarantining of coronavirus cases as well as cleaning community toilets to maintain hygiene since most of the slum residents depend on them.

The team also changed the strategy depending on the experience of work. People with symptoms were asked to come for screenings and nine BMC dispensaries and 350 private practitioners were roped in along with fever camps to carry out this exercise. After the initial 47,000 cases the strategy changed. Irrespective of symptoms, all patients were screened for fever and their oxygen saturation levels were checked. Early screening and quarantine made easy to monitoring. As a result a drastic rise in the mortality rate was avoided.

Such a commitment to purpose and responsibility of officers beyond doing the job reflect in the strategy of 'ruthless containment' adopted in Bhilwara. It is the single-minded determination of district magistrate Rajendra Bhatt which brought the situation under control in just over 10 days. As the cases increased he imposed an immediate and complete clampdown. That the team worked, did not do simply the job is evident from Bhatta's words.

'The first thing I did was isolate Bhilwara by sealing its borders with other districts', Bhatt tells *Outlook*. Explaining the model, he says, "It comprises six basic but crucial steps— isolate the district, map hotspots, door-to-door screening, aggressive contact tracing, ramp up quarantine and isolation wards, and put in place a monitoring mechanism for rural areas'.

'No one was allowed to venture out of their house. The administration had taken upon itself to deliver essentials, including food items, rations and medicines to everyone's doorstep. If people broke the social distancing rule, they were deprived of their rations for the day', says Bhatt, adding another dimension to 'ruthless'.

The team covered all the villages, panchayats, panchayat samitis and local SDMs and BDOs were involved in the team. 'Corona captains' were appointed from among SDMs and BDOs, who in turn identified four-five people among the panchayat members, teachers and ASHA workers to be 'corona fighters'. Their task was to go door-to-door, monitor and spread awareness. As many as 3,000 teams were formed to reach out to 32 lakh people of the district and 6,000 people were quarantined in an effort to vanquish the virus.

Such a strategy and involvement point to the mentality to work not to do the job. It is further evident from Bhatt's style of work. He said,

'Before announcing the complete curfew, we sent our people to dairies, surveyed how much milk each household is consuming," he said. "So that when we imposed the curfew, all we had to do is deliver an average amount to each house... Again, it was no rocket science'.

Humanity Unbound

Wind of material desire may not be always successful to extinguish the lamp of humanitarian feelings. People filled with positive humanitarian feelings like compassion, kindness, love, etc. recognise human sufferings and direct their actions towards mitigation. Normally people with such feelings go beyond their normal duty mode to wipe away tears of sufferings. In this context, Standard Workers' Action Network (SWAN) 2020, a social work initiative, organised by Ms. Sharanya Das and other alumnae of Azmi Premji University, Bangalore needs mention. The friends created an all India network to help the stranded workers during corona pandemic, but they became active since 27th

March in conducting relief work across the country. Details of the organisation's work and mode have been reported on 25th April in the Wire.

SWAN 2020 is unique in the sense that members take up social work after their office or other regular works. Even the members at their individual level also render their help where needed. Ms. Sharanya Das' sincere effort to send back stranded Odia workers from Mumbai is a case to the point which has earned her panegyric in social media.

The compassion of the actor Sonu Sood is well publicised than the work of SWAN 2020. It is obvious because he is a celebrity. The point is that he is working with friends and NGOs as a team to send back stranded worker at Mumbai home. Hindustan Times reported on its 13th May edition that the actor had made arrangements for 350 migrant workers on 11/5 to travel to Karnataka from Maharashtra, and hopes to send more people to Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh in the coming days. It was reported, when Sood 'read about these doctors, nurses, policemen and other frontline workers performing their duties selflessly, I feel inspired'. Further he added while giving interview to Bombay Mirror, 'It was so satisfying to see them happy and emotional that they are going home'. What else it shows than the feelings for humanity?

Private donations made by individuals and institutions are bases on the ideology of serving humanity. Mention may be made of industry giants such as Reliance Industries, Tata Sons, Wipro, Paytm, Infosys, HDFC Group, SBI, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Azim Premji Foundation, Adani Foundation, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, Wipro Enterprises. There are also individual donors like Akshay Kumar, Sahrukh Khan, Viral Kohli, Anuska Sharma, Karan Johar, Sonam Kapoor, Ayushman Khurrana, Sachin Tendulkar, Suresh Raina, Kartik Aaryan, Varun Dhawan, Shilpa Shetty, Bhushan Kumar, Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Manu Bhaker, Rakesh Dwivedi and several others including Ministers and MPs. These are celebrities and are capable of donating. The donation underlies a feeling for the sufferers. What is most striking was food arrangement on the way for the workers walking home by villagers, individuals and NGOs.

There are other cases of involvement of police and NGO where humanity abounds. The role of Chakma Rights and Development Organisation (CRDO), as reported on 18th June in Deccan Herald, in organising help for safe delivery when the lady was travelling in train from Chennai to Dibrugarh is

an example of what love for fellow being can do. Similarly, India Today reports on 5th May that a pregnant woman who was travelling with her family from Sangareddy district in Telangana to her native village Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh by foot was forced to deliver her child on road. The local sub-inspector learning about the matter extended help to the group of migrant labourers and shifted the mother and the baby to the Area Hospital, Ramayampet in a private ambulance. PTI reported on 24th May that after walking 100kms from Ludhiana and reaching Ambala Bindia, started having labour pain. The police took her to the civil hospital. An NGO at Ambala Cantonment made arrangements for their stay and food. It also later arranged for their safe travel in a Shramik Special train to Bihar. These are few instances of the acts of compassion and kindness showing greater human virtues.

Conclusion

The essay presents diverse nature of human behaviour. It is evident that helplessness, confusion, determination and act of courage go with the workers. But those who are considered to be 'enlightened' in terms of position, education, awareness, faith-loyalty, etc. have shown strikingly behavioural contrast- desirable and undesirable. Sympathy, fellow feeling, service attitude, good etiquettes, humanitarian feelings, etc. are quite strong among some persons; while immaturity, irresponsibility, insensitivity, iniquitous attitude, arrogance, etc are dominating in the behavioural pattern of others.

What could be reason for such contrasts? The answer to this question underlies further scientific investigation. However, the author has got access to information in two cases, which it is believed would though light to understand the contrast. Dr. Pooja Lenka, as it is reported during telephonic interview, belongs to a family of social involvement. Her father, Mr. Ramakanta Lenka, is a full time worker in *The Servants of India Society*, founded by nationalist leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Moreover, he has been associated with different bodies of Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune. Dr. Lenka worked on the topic relating to tribes for her Ph.D. assignment of Jawaharlal Nehru University under the supervision of Professor Ananad Mohan, an eminent professor of sociology in the country. Similarly, Sharanya Das, whose family at Pondicherry is associated with Sri Aurobindo Ashram there for more than two decades, got her education in Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education, the Educational Wing of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry and

post graduation in Development Studies in Azmi Premji University, Bangalore. The environment in which the two women lived, it can be inferred, could be orientation of their outlook towards social service. It will be therefore in fairness of things to argue that positive enforcement through an enabling environment is crucial to instil positive attitude, social and moral values, and humanitarian feelings in the individual. However, this preliminary statement needs in-depth study for generalisation.

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