



Human Values and behaviour in the Context of COVID-19

Suparna Dey

Department of Philosophy, Shyampur Siddheswari Mahavidyalaya, Ajodhya, Howrah – 711312, West Bengal, India

Received: 18 Dec 2022; Received in revised form: 16 Jan 2023; Accepted: 22 Jan 2023; Available online: 30 Jan 2023

©2022 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— The novel coronavirus disease or COVID-19 emerged at the end of December 2019. It has caused immense effect on the economy, human society, health system, human psychology, daily life and livelihood of human beings around the world. In India this deadly virus first attacked in Mumbai and turned to be a pandemic after rapid transmission throughout the country. During this pandemic thousands of people died due to the infection of the virus. The citizens of India became witness of an unnatural and heart throbbing situation which they had never seen before. In this adverse situation human values like faith, love, respect, affection, self-confidence, responsibility started to deteriorate and reached to the bottom line. Human behaviour is influenced by these human values. Naturally people's behaviour started to deteriorate towards others in this pandemic situation. They began to show disrespect to others, hatred and negligence to a corona patient, selfish and self-centered attitude to protect themselves only. In my opinion, most of us were compelled to show these type of negative behaviours at the beginning of this pandemic, because there was no vaccine and no treatment during those days. But today we have already spent almost one and half year in this abnormal situation and started to believe that COVID-19 does not mean death only, rather the probability of recovery from this disease is high if we follow some good habits and practices like hand-washing, wearing face mask, maintaining social distance, maintaining cleanliness etc. Now-a-days almost everyone of us is following these good practices and precautionary measures, because we have come to know that these practices will protect us from the coronavirus. Today we are all optimistic and confident that a day will definitely come when our beloved earth will be out of the adverse effect from this invisible enemy.

Keywords— Values and behaviour, COVID-19, Fear, Panic, Child Psychology, Precaution, Optimistic, Virus-free

I. HUMAN VALUES AND BEHAVIOR

The term “VALUE” comes from the Latin word “VALERE” which means “to be worth”.¹ Concisely the word “VALUE” may be realized as worth, desirability or utility of a thing. Human values are the virtues that guide us to remember the humanity when we interact with other human beings. Basic human values implies those core values which assists one to improve his/ her characteristics. More precisely it can be expressed that the human values helps to build up positive attitude inside a human being. For example human values include love, respect, affection, acceptance, patience, responsibility, honesty, loyalty, peace etc, because these basic human values bring out the fundamental goodness of human beings and society at large.² On the other hand, human behavior is related to human values. It can be said that good human values influence on the behavior of a

human being. That means, people want to act according to their values. Lack of human values may cause deterioration of human behavior. Therefore it can be said that human values are one of the factors that may determine one's behavior.

II. HISTORICAL REVIEWS OF PANDEMIC

Human civilization remains witness of different worldwide epidemics and pandemics since 6th century. Plague of Justinian is recorded as the first worldwide pandemic in the 6th century. Black Death (Bubonic Plague) which outbreak worldwide in 13th century, has been treated as most deadly and fatal pandemic in the world till date and causes a death toll of 75 – 200 million of world population. Due to this pandemic almost 30% of world population was got

reduced.³ However COVID-19, the recent threat to the World, has established itself as a deadly pandemic in today's modern world. To perceive the severity of COVID-19, it is essential to give a comparative study regarding the different

pandemics occurred throughout the world in the past. Therefore some statistical data regarding some of severe pandemics happened in the past are given below.⁴

SL.	Epidemics/ Pandemics	Death Toll	Date	Location	Rank as per severity
1	Plague of Justinian	15 – 100 million	541 – 549	Europe and West Asia	3
2	Black Death	75 – 200 million	1346 – 1353	Europe, Asia and North Africa	1
3	Third Cholera Pandemic	1 million +	1846 - 1860	Worldwide	7
4	Third Plague Pandemic	12 – 15 million	1855 - 1960	Worldwide	4
5	Spanish Flu	17 – 100 million	1918 – 1920	Worldwide	2
6	Influenza Pandemic	1 – 4 million	1957 – 1958	Worldwide	5
7	Hong Kong Flu	1 – 4 million	1968 - 1969	Worldwide	6

As per the recent data up to 30th June 2021 of WHO (World Health Organization) it has been confirmed that COVID-19 has snatched the lives of almost 4 million people and affects more than 180 millions of people throughout the world within only 1.5 years of time span (since December 2019).⁵ Moreover this huge lose happened in today's modern world where medical science has become so powerful and upgraded that human civilization never imagine this kind of horrible situation. Not only that, the modern medical science is not able to succeed against the COVID-19 virus completely, although some vaccines have been invented so far, but medical science can not give assurance how long and to what extent the vaccination can protect the human lives from this deadly virus due to the rapid change of its characteristics. If the infectability of COVID-19 is concerned, then it is evident that the recent *Delta* strain of COVID-19 is 55% more transmissible compared to the *Alpha* strain (First Strain) of COVID-19.⁶ Analyzing the impacts of COVID-19 and the enlisted previous pandemics happened in the past, it can be emphasized that COVID-19 is a real threat to the mankind in today's world.

III. EFFECT ON HUMAN VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR

From the historical overview it is clear that Novel coronavirus or COVID-19 has caused a pandemic which is truly comparable to other pandemics happened in the ancient periods. It had immense effect on the economy, human society, health structure, daily life and livelihood of

human beings, human mind and psychology, child psychology throughout the world. The socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are profound and unprecedented around the world and also for our country. In the month of December 2019 when our neighbour country China was first entrapped by this deadly coronavirus, we, the citizen of India, were terrified and shocked listening and visualizing some tragic and horrible consequences of COVID-19.⁷ Then in the middle of February 2020, this virus began to spread out around the several countries and continents of the world. Among these countries USA, Italy, Britain, France, Germany, Brazil started to be affected heavily by COVID-19, where everyday rate of infection and mortality reached to several thousands. Especially the mortality rate and the rate of infection due to the highly transmission of this virus reached to a summit (several thousands per day) in Italy. The medical infrastructures of Italy, although being advanced and upgraded, was compelled to surrender in front of the coronavirus. All these news were reached to us through various media like television, news paper, social media, Internet and became a hot cake of discussion and sometimes subject of analysis. Some of us artificially expressed their anxiety and sympathy to those distressed people who were affected by COVID-19 in those countries, but most of us would give the consolation to our inner mind that we were safe and secure from this virus, because India was not affected by COVID-19 during that time. But this safe and peaceful time did not last long in India. In the month of March 2020 COVID-19 virus first attacked in Mumbai and spread across India rapidly. Many

people became victimized due to the coronavirus. To avoid the devastating situation happen in other countries, India Government took the correct and timely decision of full Lock-down throughout the country since 23rd March 2020. The entire country became standstill and stagnant, normal daily lives and livelihood of 130 crores of citizens ceased to flow, all the transport services as well as public services except health service was made stopped suddenly. Millions of individuals all around the country have been told to stay in their houses and not to go outside except any exigency. Although many people managed to continue their work from home, millions of people failed to work from home and earn money. All of a sudden the surroundings around us changed abruptly. The citizens of India became witness of an unnatural and heart throbbing situation which they had never seen before. In this adverse situation human values like faith, love, respect, affection, self-confidence, responsibility started to deteriorate and reached to the bottom line. As a result the social bonding among the individuals became weak and sluggish. One person started to suspect other with a misconception that the other person may be COVID-19 affected without any symptoms (Asymptomatic Carriers of coronavirus) and may transmit the infection of coronavirus. This suspicious mind originates lack of faith, hatred, disrespect, ignorance to others and leads a decay of our society. Some of us began to protect only his/ her family and became confined to the thinking of how to give a safe and secure zone to his/ her spouse, children, father and mother. This selfish attitude generates lack of responsibility to our neighbour and society. On that time there was no vaccine and medicine for the treatment of a corona patient, but the health workers like doctors, nurses continued to provide the restless full effort and support to the corona patients endangering their own lives. Even many doctors and nurses surrendered their lives to serve the corona patients. They are the real front-line COVID warriors in our society. Due to their heart and soul efforts against the coronavirus, it has been possible to save the lives of so many peoples. But sometimes in return they have got some bitter experiences and practical difficulties from the society where a doctor has been refused to enter his/ her residence and even to the locality of his/ her home. This type of incidence establishes the decrease of morality and gratitude of human beings. As a consequence it is evident that coronavirus has caused an unhealthy environment and instability in the human society where the basic human values have been degraded drastically.

People's behaviour is influenced by human values and social norms, what they perceive that others are doing or what they think that others approve or disapprove of.⁸ These perceptions may be incorrect which leads to the misconceptions and superstitions in the human minds.

When these kind of wrong perceptions and blind beliefs take place in human mind, his/ her behaviour to the others will be changed. The reasons for the deterioration of human behaviours during this worst prevailing situation of COVID-19 are manifold.

i) Fear – One of the main reasons of behavioral change during COVID-19 pandemic is fear. Fear is an unpleasant emotional state of human mind which is triggered by the perception of threatening. Lot of factors may cause anxiety and panic in mind.⁹ It was listened at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak “The mortality rate of COVID-19 is very high and there is no treatment of this disease”. This message created tremendous fear in human mind. It is the normal tendency of human beings to show interest on a negative news or facts rather than a positive and motivating information. We like to listen to not only the negative information but also share and spread those information among the others who again share the same information in a more exaggerated way. Thus a negative information spreads out among the people cumulatively and rapidly. Some media like television channels focused on these type of news to draw the attention of the viewers for increasing the popularity of their channel. For example, the number of deaths and infections due to COVID-19 was more highlighted than the number of cured persons, some research outcomes by various Universities or organizations regarding coronavirus that may create panic, was focused by the media instead of broadcasting the convincing and promoting news. Moreover the social media in this respect has played a completely disappointing role. Most of the fake, wrong and confusing information have been published and shared among the people through these type of social media like Facebook, WhatsApp etc. In this extremely despairing and scaring environment panic may be induced among the people. It may not only increase the tendency of committing suicide but also may cause deaths of many mentally weak persons due to suicides. In some cases fear has reached such a limit that individuals have committed suicide with a belief in their mind that they were COVID-19 affected though autopsies showed that they were not. From the above discussion it can be said that the degradation of human behaviour is quite natural in this fearful pandemic situation.

ii) Increase of Unemployment – The economic conditions of the COVID-19 affected countries became alarming during the Lock-down period. India being a poor developing country with a very high population density faced a real economic crisis due to the prolonged Lock-down period of eight months since March 2020. As a result many small scale and medium scale industries were made shut-down permanently causing a huge number of unemployment. Some large scale industries implemented the policy of

retrenchments and deduction of the employee's salary to reduce the financial burden. A significant number of people from the lower-income group like hawkers, small scale businessman became unable to continue their day-to-day activities from home. Around one crore of employees lost their jobs during this Lock-down period in India. Even a large number of citizens below the poverty level started to survive in starvation. The most shocking news is that since there was no transport service across the country during this crucial period, many of the migrant workers being jobless were walking back to their home and many of them succumbed on the way as they were in prolonged starvation. Consequently many people started to be worried about their jobs, business and daily earning. This anxiety made the behavioral changes among the people.

iii) Uncertainty in new Employment – During the Lock-down period several multi-national companies and industries have stopped the recruitment of fresh candidates due to the financial crisis. Therefore the opportunity to getting fresh jobs has reached to almost zero and the future carriers of the young generation have become uncertain. As a result many of this young generation have started to be worried about their future. These anxious and disappointing minds of our young generation have initiated some negative changes in their behaviour.

iv) Boredom – During this pandemic period all the people have been compelled to stay at home. This prolonged Lock-down period has produced monotony, impatience, irritation, instability in human minds. Sometimes this mental and psychological effect becomes so immense that it may initiate arrogant behaviours and even domestic violence.

Despite of all these difficulties in this crisis period it is well-known “Precaution is better than cure”. It will be possible to overcome all these difficulties and intricacies if we adopt some good practices and follow some precautionary measures during the pandemic like regular hand washing/sanitizing, wearing of face mask outside home, avoiding crowded places, covering up face while coughing, maintaining social distance of at least 3 meters, avoid touching face when outside, taking consultation of doctor and staying at home (self-quarantine) when sick, maintain cleanliness, abide by the guidelines given by the government time-to-time and many more. At the beginning of this pandemic though we have showed some ignorance to these protective measures, but now realizing the requirement of these awareness most of us are following them. Not only that we have began to understand the remedies of coronavirus and how to protect ourselves from the infection of this virus. Now we are able to perceive that COVID-19 does not mean death. We can observe that lots of people are recovering from this disease, the recovery rate

is above 90% per day whereas the mortality rate is negligible, less than 1%. Many SARS-COV-2 (COVID-19) infections are mild and asymptomatic. The rate of infections has been decayed significantly throughout the world due to the invention of COVID-19 vaccines and rapid vaccination drive applied on the nations within a very short span of time. These positive aspects during this pandemic situation has supplied positive energy in our mind and helped us to improve the good behaviours like showing respects and affections to others, expressing confidence to motivate others, showing love to a COVID patient instead of hatred, performing duties and responsibilities to a COVID affected person instead of negligence, showing pleasant and peaceful mind to remove the frustrations from others, showing consciousness not panic.

IV. EFFECT ON CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

Children are the future generation who will build up the society and nation. Unfortunately it can not be assured that they are out of the danger of coronavirus. The impact of COVID-19 on them may be profound and far-reaching throughout the world. Isolation, physical distance and loneliness are not normal for every human being and more challenging for a child.¹⁰ A child can not realize what the pandemic is and what are the requirements of Lock-down. Even he can not express his feelings, requirements and problems. Due to the Lock-down all the children are confined to their house. They are not allowed to play outside, interact and share their feelings with their own peer groups. As a result they are feeling loneliness inside the room and become addicted to mobile phone, computer which may cause psychological and physical effect on them. In addition to this, the education of the children has been impaired by the closure of the schools for long period, because the online classes become monotonous and cumbersome to understand for many children. Moreover the education of the children from the low socioeconomic group has been affected badly due to lack of Internet facilities or slow Internet speed.

V. CONCLUSION

The historical reviews shows that human civilization faced the epidemic and pandemic situations many times in the ancient period. In the 13th century mankind witnessed the most deadly and scared form of pandemic “Black Death” which caused the deaths of nearly 200 million people. Even after that, human civilization was not completely destroyed and demolished. So we have to be optimistic that a day will definitely come when our beloved earth will be out of the adverse effect of COVID-19 pandemic. Everyday we are expecting a germ-free, healthy green earth and we should be

not only socially but also mentally united up to that day. We have to follow the precautionary measures and must be careful but not to be panic during this pandemic situation. However it can be emphasized that in today's world we are very much aware of our invisible enemy (coronavirus) and approaching to the correct direction to build up a new earth where our next generation will be safe and secure. Coronavirus will not last for ever, but in real sense our earth will not be virus-free (stigma-free) unless we are able to adopt moral values and good behaviours to make our soul purified and sacred.

REFERENCES

- [1] Piyasa M n.d., *Human Values: Meaning, Nature and Types*, accessed 1 July 2021, <<https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/values/human-values-meaning-nature-and-types/86964>>
- [2] Vellore Institute of Technology n.d., *Human Values and Professional Ethics*, accessed 1 July 2021, <https://vit.ac.in/files/Ethics_Manual.pdf>
- [3] Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia n.d., *Black Death*, accessed 2 July 2021, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Death>
- [4] Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia n.d., *List of epidemics*, accessed 2 July 2021, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_epidemics>
- [5] World Health Organization n.d., *WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard*, accessed 2 July 2021, <<https://covid19.who.int/>>
- [6] Jason Gale July 2021, *From Alpha to Delta, Why Virus Mutations Cause Alarm*, accessed 3 July 2021, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-01/from-alpha-to-delta-why-virus-mutations-cause-alarm-quicktake>>
- [7] Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia n.d., *Coronavirus*, accessed 5 July 2021, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus>>
- [8] Shah, A. K., Ravichandran, P., Ravichandran, P., COVID-19 pandemic: insights into human behaviour, *International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health*, Oct 2020, Vol – 7, Issue 10, p.4213
- [9] Pakpour, A. H., Griffiths, M. D., The fear of COVID-19 and its role in preventive behaviours, 2020, Vol – (TBD) No. (TBD), p.2
- [10] Gupta, S., Jawanda, M. K., 14 July 2020, *The impacts of COVID-19 on children*, Wiley Online Library, accessed 4 July 2021, <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/apa.15484>>