Corona Pandemic and Disruption in Social Structure

Dr. Parveen Kumar*, Dr. Kunzang Lamo*, Dr. D. Namgyal**, Sonam Angchuk***

*Subject Matter Specialist (Ag. Extension and Vegetable Science), KVK-Leh, SKUAST-K
** Head, KVK-Leh, SKUAST-K, ***Programme Assistant (Computer) KVK-Leh, SKUAST-K

ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 has come as a natural disaster rattling the mankind. Natural disasters have the capacity to bring social disruption in the society. While the country has largely been successful in containing the spread of virus and saving so many precious lives, yet it has brought with it what we can call as threats to our society. The traditional value system, fear of unemployment and drug addiction, violence against women, disharmony and jealousy and division in social classes are some of the worrying aspects for the sociologists. The society is not definitely going to be the same post COVID-19 epidemic.
KEY WORDS: structure, disruption, disharmony, violence, social class

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Humanity is perhaps going through one of the toughest times with the deadly virus continuously consuming lives after lives. The world does not know who the 'patient zero' i. e the first person to be infected and transmit it to others was. The severity of this virus, which has caught the world by surprise, lies not only in the delay of laboratories in finding an effective and efficient vaccine, but also in the fact that the measures taken to counter it differ considerably from what was previously adopted to confront various acute crisis, whether health political, social or economic. Even the United Nations has acknowledged it as a crisis unlike any other in its 75 years old history. Corona virus is killing peoples, spreading human sufferings and upending peoples' lives. Besides being a human and economic, it has turned out to be a social crisis disrupting the social structure too.

Human beings are social animals. We all live in a society. What we do, how we behave in a particular situation and how we react to different situations has a bearing on the social fabric as well as the social structure of the country. Social structure refers to the distinctive, stable arrangement of institutions whereby human beings in a society interact and live together. According to Moris Ginsberg, social structure is concerned with the principal form of social organization, i.e. types of groups, associations and institutions and the complex of these which constitute societies. Social structure is often treated together with the concept of social change, which deals with the forces that change the social structure and the organization of society. Change is the law of nature and a society has to keep on changing itself. Sometimes due to one or the other reason disruption of a certain kind takes place in different societies. This is called as social disruption. It is a term used to describe the alteration, dysfunction or breakdown of social life, often in a community setting. Social disruption implies a radical transformation, in which the old certainties of modern society are falling away and something quite new is emerging (Beck, 2016). Social disruption might be caused through natural disasters, massive human displacements, rapid economic, technological and demographic change but also due to controversial policy-making. The Corona virus referred to as COVID-19 has come as a natural disaster affecting the social structure of the society. It has differential effects on the gender, age, education, kinships, social cohesion and different patterns of social interaction. It would not be wrong to say that COVID-19 has brought disruption in the social structure at least in some cases. The present review article highlights how it has brought in disruption in the society:

A. LOSS OF SOCIAL VALUES AMIDST SOCIAL STIGMA:

This social values and the social system are under threat. Humanity has touched a new low when the members of the family are refusing to perform the last rites of their family member who died of corona virus. Can anyone would have ever imagined that a son will not take the dead body of his father or mother for his or her last rites. Ultimately the administration had too performs the last rites of the dead. This has taken the form of untouchability and became more of a social stigma. It would not be wrong to say that in the near future this may lead to a social boycott of the family whose any one member if found corona positive. A report in the Tribune

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published few days back reported that peoples returning to their villages from outside the state facing boycott. In many of the cases villagers are shunning the returnees', doctors and health officials.

B. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

The violence against women is another worrisome aspect of this corona outbreak. The recent report of the United Nations regarding women is an eye opener for all of us. The report titled COVID 19 and ending violence against women and girls has reported that since the outbreak of COVID-19 violence against women and particularly domestic violence has increase manifold in many countries. In France case of domestic violence has increased by about 30 per cent since lockdown on March 17. Such cases have also been reported from countries such as Canada, Argentina, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom and United States. In Argentina, emergency calls for domestic violence cases have increased by 25 per cent since lockdown (The Tribune). In India too, the condition is more or less the same. The National commission for Women has recorded a more than two fold rise in gender based violence n the national lockdown period. The total complaints from women rose from 116 in the first week of March to 257 in the final week of March (NCW). This is perhaps men at home take out all their frustration on their wives. Salary cuts, joblessness and sitting home idle have already put these men on the edge and feeling frustrated, they find no better person than their wives to take out all their frustration.

C. FEAR OF ADDICTION:

The lockdown has closed all the educational institutes. Across the globe more than one billion youth are now no longer present physically in school. Although efforts are on to provide them online education, but given the usage of smart phones in village settings the desirable results will not be obtained. This would ultimately result in the compromise with quality of education. The vulnerable youth such as homeless or migratory will face a precarious situations. They are the ones who can easily be changed from a constructive to a destructive mode by motivating them towards addiction and liquor consumption unless and until the government do not pay specific attention to them. Fear is that if not properly addressed through appropriate measures, this social crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic may also increase inequality, exclusion, discrimination and global unemployment in the medium and long term.

D. DISHARMONY AND HOSTILITY:

Many cases have been reported where the peoples have turned hostile and responded very aggressively and violently when they are asked to get themselves tested for COVID-19. Even the front line workers from health department, from police department have been a victim of the violent attack from these highly hostile peoples. Such type of hostility also causes disharmony in the state (Javadekar and Vaidya, 2020).

E. DIVISION IN SOCIAL CLASSES:

Covid-19 shows us again that there is still a divide in social classes. All classes are facing their own types of problems during this crisis. The class divide is still apparent. Those who are economically better off have anyhow managed the things but those who are poor find themselves destitute in the present scenario. Peoples including the poor, the vulnerable and the migrant labourers are on the verge of starvation and their weakened physical condition will again make them more susceptible to various diseases. Early evidence indicates that that the health and economic impacts of the virus are being borne disproportionately by poor people (UN, 2020). The homeless peoples are unable to safely shelter in place are highly exposed to the danger of the virus. People without access to running water, refugees, migrants, or displaced persons also stand to suffer disproportionately both from the pandemic and its aftermath whether due to limited movement, fewer employment opportunities, increased xenophobia etc.

F. THREAT TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES:

Indigenous communities living in isolated and far of places are particularly vulnerable at this time due to significantly higher rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases, lack of access to essential services, absence of culturally appropriate healthcare, and if any, under-equipped and under-staffed local medical facilities. The first point of prevention is the dissemination of information in indigenous languages, thus ensuring that services and facilities are appropriate to the specific situation of indigenous peoples, and all are reached. The large number of indigenous peoples who are outside of the social protection system further contributes to vulnerability, particularly if they are dependent on income from the broader economy – produce, tourism, handicrafts and employment in urban areas. In this regard, Governments should ensure that interim financial support measures include indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups.

G. REVERSE MIGRATION:

Amidst continued lockdown, the migrant labourers working in different states are returning back to their native states and the government has arranged for their return. Also many other workers including the agricultural labourers did not go to other states for harvesting of wheat crop. The Centre had allowed only stranded migrants to be sent back home. But now even those labourers who are not stranded are getting tempted for registration to return to their home states because of the availability of free rail travel. Let us take the case of Punjab alone. In this state 6.44 lakh migrants have registered themselves with the state government for going back to their states (The Tribune). Of this 3.26 lakh are from Uttar Pradesh and 2.22 lakh are from Bihar.

Besides, many labourers are from states of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Chattisgarh. Farmers are equally worried over the fate of paddy sowing which will start next month, it is going to be a difficult task of paddy transplantation in the wake of labour shortage. According to Santosh K Mehrotra Professor of Economics at the Center for Informal Sector and Labour Studies at Jawaharlal Lal Nehru University said that the current reverse migration has set the country back by 15 years.

H. THE FOURTH HUMAN REVOLUTION

Sociologists perceive it as a humanitarian revolution, the kind that has occurred only thrice before: first, after the discovery of fire; second, with the advent of agriculture; and third, following the industrial revolution. The most prominent sign of this 'fourth revolution' is the predominance of new technology and the supremacy of modern means of communication, which have spawned a conflict between two major concepts of using the internet. The first can be described as social perception with a human connects, while the second is non-social perception, and can be termed as wild and unbridled. The humanitarian-minded perception is likely to win this conflict, as this human revolution is making its mark on our social existence and old behaviour. This will impact the current value system and will have political and economic implications. The post-epidemic stage will see the emergence of a new human being, whose daily behaviour and thinking will differ from what it was before the Covid-19 outbreak. The political, legal and economic systems will have to adapt to this new human being.

I. A COMMUNAL ANGLE:

Social distancing, it seems to be hitting people even more than the scare of the deadly virus. In spite of media connectivity, peoples are getting highly restive and agitated. Masses of people trapped in fear and uncertainty, many of them high on anxiety, depression and frustration has lead to a volcanic situation which can be triggered off with any little provocation. Things can be done more easily in India where communal card can be played easily which could further flare up into racial hatred and violence which will rip apart the secular fibre of our country.

II. CONCLUSION:

Let us all hope that the Covid-19 storm will pass and mankind will survive, despite the loss of many lives. Humankind will soon live in a world that is very different from the one before the virus.. But post COVID-19, the situation has to be properly addressed through appropriate policies that should promote inclusion, non discrimination, employment and equality. Comprehensive, universal social protection systems, when in place, play a much durable role in protecting workers and in reducing the prevalence of poverty, since they act as automatic stabilizers. That is, they provide basic income security at all times, thereby enhancing people's capacity to manage and overcome shocks. The United Nations Secretary-General has rightly remarked that, 'we must come to the aid of the ultra-vulnerable millions upon millions of people who are least able to protect themselves. This is a matter of basic human solidarity. It is also crucial for combating the virus. This is the moment to step up for the vulnerable

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