

## COVID-19-THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCENARIO OF A POST IN INDIA

**Dr. Deoman S Umbarkar**

Department Of Sociology,  
Late.Vasantrao Kolhatkar Arts College,  
Rohana Tah.Arvi , Dist.Wardha

---

**Abstract :** *The pandemic could not have come at a more difficult time; the global order could see major changes. As COVID-19 spreads exponentially across the world, and the figures of those testing positive as numbers of deaths keep increasing in near-geometrical progression, profound uncertainty and extreme volatility are wreaking havoc of a kind seldom encountered previously. It might, hence, be wise to start thinking of what next, if at least to try and handle a situation created by the most serious pandemic in recent centuries. At one point, India was estimated to be among the 15 most affected economies by the COVID-19 epidemic, but as the pandemic has raged unchecked, all bets are off. An early estimate by the Asian Development Bank, soon after the epidemic was declared, was that it would cost the Indian economy \$29.9 billion. A recent industry estimate pegs the cost of the lockdown at around 4% of India's GDP. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) had at one point warned that the COVID-19 impact, and the existing stress in the financial sector.*

**Key Words:** COVID-19, Pandemic, Corona-virus, Disrupt, Crisis, Civil Society

---

### Introduction :

The problem with the 'novel corona-virus' is that with the exception of China, which battled another coronavirus epidemic in 2003 - the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic - there is little available for most nations on which to base their assessment of what next. What is known is that China's growth rate has further plummeted, even as it was confronting an economic slowdown which had been in the works for some time. The consequences for the global economy of China ceasing to be the world's biggest exporter of manufactured goods are considerable, and with no country in a position to replace it, this development will precipitate a further economic downturn internationally. It is not the intention here to minimize the human costs of the tragedy that has unfolded, and which is still unfolding, consequent on COVID-19. If China was the worst affected nation initially, The United States, Spain, Germany and Italy have since eclipsed China. Many other countries are today facing a serious plight, and few, if any, remedies are as yet available even as the human costs keep mounting.

The world was already having to contend with an uncertain economic environment, with industries in turn facing newer challenges such as having to adjust to a shift from cost efficiencies to innovation and breakthrough improvements. Added to this were: a global

slowdown, increasing political and policy uncertainties, alterations in social behavior, new environmental norms, etc. Newly emerging economies, such as India, were even more affected by all this, than some of the older established ones. India has, no doubt, acted with speed in the wake of the pandemic and declared a lockdown early on. Indian P.M. declared the pandemic as a serious global crisis, and announced a series of steps such as a one day 'people's curfew' 'social distancing' and three-week-long lockdown. Several precautionary measures based on guidelines in vogue elsewhere in the world for preventing pandemics have been introduced including home isolation, quarantine, etc.

The prognosis as to what lies ahead is indeed bleak. Uncertainty, panic and lockdown policies are expected to cause demand worldwide to decline in a precipitous way. This will inevitably lead to a vicious downward cycle, where companies close down, resulting in more lay-offs and a further drop in consumption. A precipitous decline in GDP would follow. To compensate for this loss, massive inflows of government funds would be needed, but most governments, India included, might find it difficult to find adequate resources for this purpose. Equally important, if not more so, is that such massive inflows of funds should be here and now, and not later, by which time the situation may well have spiraled out of control.

### **Objectives of the Present Study :**

To understand and present the Socio-economic reality of the countrywide scenario of the post COVID-19 crises in India.

### **Research Methodology :**

For the purpose understand and present the Socio-economic reality of the post COVID-19 crises in India, the data has been collected from secondary data sources. The data had compiled from Journals, Magazines, Newspapers including the Web and E-Medea. The data has been analyzed on basis of the objective of the study and interpret the fact which present the social reality of the countrywide scenario of post Covid-19 in India.

### **Discussion and Result :**

#### **Pandemic as Disrupter :**

COVID-19 is, in turn, expected to bring about major changes in the global order. Some of these changes have, no doubt, been in the making for some time, but would get accelerated. As of now, these shifts cannot but, and are likely to, have a direct impact on the liberal international order. It could, in turn, give a boost to authoritarian regimes and authoritarian trends. Moving away from the political and economic consequences of COVID-19 are other concerns arising from an extended lockdown, social distancing and isolation. Psychologists are even talking of an 'epidemic of despair' arising from a fear of unknown causes, resulting in serious anxiety and mental problems. Extended isolation, according to

psychologists, can trigger a different kind of pandemic even leading to possible suicidal tendencies, depression, alcoholism, eccentric behavioral patterns.

Another fallout from the current epidemic might well be the extent to which inequality in incomes impact segments of the population, facing a common malaise. Country lacking a comprehensive nationwide health system would find this an even more difficult situation to handle. Meantime, as the economy weakens, accompanied by job losses, those without high levels of skills would fall further behind. This is evident to some extent already given recent reports of mass migration across the Indian landmass. Out of work migrant labour, unable to find new jobs since they lack the necessary skills, are attempting to return to their normal habitat, bringing in their wake untold suffering and, perhaps even the spread of the virus. This has all the makings of a huge human tragedy. Existing curbs on their movement would further exacerbate the problem, and could even lead to a major law and order situation.

### **Socio-economy will not be the same post pandemic retreats :**

As the economy changes, the need for lifelong learning is becoming more urgent than ever. During the lockdown period, people have learned things that they would never have before. It is said our economy and our society will not be the same from here on. The need for learning skills that will help to survive and thrive in the new economy was already being discussed before COVID-19. It appears now that the economy is going to change even more drastically. There will be more people dependent on agriculture and rural livelihoods. We need more productive land resources and more rural livelihoods. A large number of people have returned to villages. Some will go back to old jobs while others will need new skills to find work. The education system has to be sensitive to the immediate needs of the youth as we contemplate long-term reforms. There is going to be individual need to learn new work skills. Our experiences during lockdown are pointing us in the direction of necessary and possible changes.

### **The role of civil society in times of crisis :**

The lockdown has come with many restrictions to our work. Yet, there is plenty we can do to help communities, hold governments accountable, and ensure that the vulnerable have a voice. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shown us something that most of us haven't seen in our lifetimes: Large numbers of people unable to have two meals a day. The tragedy is that the government has enough and more food-grains to feed people during this time; the real issue is of distribution—both in terms of broken supply chains, as well as the insistence of the government to limit distribution to beneficiaries under the 'National Food Security Act' i.e., priority ration card holders. This approach is flawed because the NFSA has many exclusions, with some of the poorest of the poor, nomadic or Adivasi communities, and the urban poor being left out. Moreover, ration cards are of no use to migrant workers stuck outside their home state.

There are similar issues of exclusion in other services as well, such as livelihoods and healthcare. This is where civil society must step into put pressure on the government to universalize these services. At the ‘Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangh’ and through many networks, have been petitioning the government to distribute food-grains to everyone, and we need to apply this kind of pressure at a larger scale. It’s seen this work in the past, in the case of programs such as ‘National Food Security Act’ and the ‘Mt. Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act’ - both these were a result of consultative processes between the government and civil society. In fact, these rights-based legislations are providing with framework for public service delivery during the crisis.

### **Build a network of civil society :**

Civil society will have to build a network that cuts across the country. We will need to map the different organizations and groups providing relief in every district, block, and down to every village. We can do this because we have volunteers and workers-from field staff of nonprofits to government school teachers-all over the country, and we know whom we can contact for any information or assistance at any place. The strength of civil society lies in knowing and being the small, decentralized units that have taken responsibility for their entire area—identifying the number of people in the area, the relief needed, the gaps in government relief, the challenges on the ground, and so on. By bringing them together and forming a network, we can enable these units to call upon each other for assistance, such as procuring material or rebuilding supply chains. Most importantly, the network can have a voice at the national-level that says everyone is entitled to benefits, even if they are not ration card holders or active workers under NREGA.

### **Stand of delivering essential services :**

COVID-19 is a high-risk disease, and we need to be very careful; but we cannot simply lock ourselves in our homes, because then those who are most vulnerable will not survive. Essential services absolutely have to continue. We have to build systems and mechanisms for safe delivery of services, and public servants have to be motivated, and given economic and moral support. Even though this has to be primarily done by the government, civil society organizations have a huge role to play as well. For instance, we need to stand in solidarity with those who are currently delivering these services-frontline health workers, sanitation workers, people running ration shops and *kirana* stores, those making home deliveries of goods, and so on. We have to understand their problems and put pressure on the government to support them.

The Delhi government recently announced insurance of Rs. One crore for frontline workers. That is the kind of security we should demand for every individual delivering services in this period. These essential jobs could also be the answer to protecting the livelihoods of the poor during this time, by creating a fallback public works need to chart the vital program, unprecedented in scale. Civil society can demonstrate this model to the government. The services required today, such as delivering rations and caregiving, and show

to the government how people can be employed in these roles. This will not only help communities affected by the pandemic, but the mechanism of doing so might help others in turn.

### **Continue social movement in innovative ways :**

When first lockdown happened, we filed a case in the Supreme Court to say that all active workers under NREGA should be given wages for all 21 days. The case is being heard via video conferencing. So, we have to explore all options that help put pressure on the government. We can engage with the state, send press notes, exchange information within our networks of civil society organizations, and document what's happening on the ground. Civil society leaders and activists must also continue writing for newspapers and alternative media to highlight the situation of the most vulnerable, and do it in a more organized way, by taking the unheard voices and disseminating them using our networks.

These must not just be confined to stories of suffering, but include positive stories and creative practices as well-of people working together despite socio-economic differences. Civil society can also help advocate that best practices in one state be replicated in others. This is an opportunity for civil society to highlight the plight of migrant laborers that existed even before the pandemic-their work and living conditions, the insecurity of work, and the fact that they have no real social support from the state. Therefore, in addition to looking after their welfare and security, we must recognize their contribution, and build respect for them and their work-not as a favor, but as a means to empower them.

### **Work with the Government :**

The role of civil society does not stop at putting pressure on the government. There are many areas that the government is unable to reach; we have to reach there. We have to use our transparency and accountability mechanisms to monitor the government's work and make sure state resources are well-used. We also need to proactively find the gaps, and help fill those gaps. The government structure is working well in some areas and not working in others. In some of those places, the government is itself asking for our help. Given the enormity of the intervention required, the government cannot do it on its own, and civil society cannot replace the vast role of the government in facing this crisis. While civil society organizations can take responsibility for one area and fully ensure the well-being of the people there, we must also work with local governments, help people access relief measures down to every rural and urban ward, and fill the gaps in the government's response.

Apart from this, each one of us needs to think hard of the ways in which we can contribute. As individuals, we can immediately start looking at those around us-in our villages and our localities. Some of us can provide economic resources to plug the government's gaps; others can take up the job of distribution. There needs to be a concerted campaign for instance, to use the excessive food-grain stocks to universalize the PDS, at least for the next few months. We also need to support the demand for an enhanced employment guarantee program for rural and urban areas. We don't realize how powerful the middle-

class, if they raise their voice enough, we will see improved situations around us. And lastly, let us not forget democracy at this time-the right to speak, the right to challenge. We need to amplify that voice to ensure that the most vulnerable get the most support, and those who are affluent only get something if it helps the most vulnerable.

### Concluding Remark :

This is the time of a medical emergency. Crisis time calls for togetherness and partnership. Countries have to work together while dealing with the crisis, particularly for the post-crisis recovery. No event better demonstrates why a stronger network between countries is so vital to design a strategy for the entire Asian region. People who are ill with Coronavirus need doses of new medicines, which then go on building antibodies, save lives, improve oxygen levels and speed up recovery. In the same way, countries today need “economic antibodies” to save the economies from further disasters. Gradual opening of the economies and adjusting in “New Normal” is the need of the hour. Stimulus works well when it is well coordinated. India must step up its diplomatic strength in South and Southeast Asia as there are new scope and opportunities. Activating the Indo-Pacific this time may return high dividends in the post-pandemic period.

In this time of crisis, countries follow Keynesianism to generate jobs for the community, which will then help to improve the aggregate demand, and the production. Growth may eventually happen if both rise. At the same time, countries shall undertake reform to strengthen the digital economy and e-commerce not only to manage the pandemic but also to facilitate trade. Trade barriers should not be allowed to happen in trade in goods and services particularly those feed the health science. Since the onus is now on the government, the managed market economy should be allowed to work till the growth returns back. India must continue to play a larger role in building a cohesive neighborhood in this “New Normal” at a time when the partnership will be guided by new ethics, challenges and responses.

### References :

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) <https://www.harvard.edu/coronavirus> [Internet]. Harvard University, [cited 2020 Mar 21].
- Resilient leadership responding to COVID-19 | deloitte insights. <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/insights/economy/covid-19/heart-of-resilient-leadership-responding-to-covid-19.html> [Internet].
- Sohrabi C., Alsafi Z., O'Neill N., Khan M., Kerwan A., Al-Jabir A. World Health Organization declares global emergency: a review of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) *Int. J. Surg.* 2020 Apr;76:71–76. [PMC free article] [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Buck T., Arnold M., Chazan G., Cookson C. Coronavirus declared a pandemic as fears of economic crisis mount. 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/d72f1e54-6396-11ea-b3f3-fe4680ea68b5> [Internet].

- COVID-19. <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19> [Internet]. American Veterinary Medical Association.
- OPEC's pact with Russia falls apart, sending oil into tailspin. Reuters. 2020 Mar 6. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-opec-meeting-idUSKBN20T0Y2> [Internet].
- Breakeven oil prices underscore shale's impact on the market. <https://www.dallasfed.org:443/research/economics/2019/0521> [Internet].
- M.K. Narayan, The Hindu Daily, 19/06/2020, UPDATED: APRIL 04, 2020 01:18 IST <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-spectre-of-a-post-covid-19-world/article31252172.ece/dt.19/06/2020> [Internet].