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SIGNIFICANCE OF GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE OF HEALTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE SCENARIO OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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Abstract

The World Health Organization declared the novel-Corona virus outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020. To avoid the risk of community spread of covid-19(which is highly infectious) the Governments have taken the decision of lockdown for certain period. to combat the pandemic situation, we must follow the basic preventive measures, lockdown strictly. But at the same time, if we want to overcome this existential crisis, we should maintain hygiene life, have too self-sufficient. In a sense, the Gandhian thoughts are very meaningful and helpful during this period.

Keywords: Covid-19, Lockdown, Mental Health, Pandemic, Prevention, Swaraj.

Introduction

The first case of novel Corona virus was reported on December, 2019 in Wuhan City of China, as they informed the World Health Organisation. After that the disease continues to spread across the different countries of the world and consequently the World Health Organisation declared it a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The risk factor with the Covid-19 virus is that, till now there is no recognized medicine or vaccines to alleviate it. As reported the infected patients are being given the symptomatic treatment by the doctors. The rate of mortality is low and even far less than many other diseases. Since, this member of the corona virus group is very new (thus 'novel'), there is still lots of confusions among the doctors and medical researchers regarding its symptoms, spreading rates path of treatment and the exact drug. But there is one common suggestion among them and that is prevention. We know the old saying- "Prevention is better than cure" and for this medical crisis, this fits exactly. Prevention is the only way out to fight with the Novel-Corona virus. There are few preventive measures like - washing hands properly with soap and water regularly (if soap and water is not available use hand sanitizer), wash hand before touching eye, nose and mouth, throw used tissues into closed bin immediately after use, cover nose and mouth with mask or handkerchief, avoid mass gathering and crowded place as advised by the World Health Organisation, medical institutes, doctors. The governments across countries are consistently trying to make people aware regarding the importance of practising the preventive measures amid of this pandemic. Moreover, to avoid the risk of community spread of covid-19(which is highly infectious), Governments have taken the decision of lockdown (partial or complete or both) for certain period. The lockdown is required to break the chain of infection and successful lockdown episodes have shown positive results in terms of falling infection rates. But it has some difficulties also, like the workers in the informer sector are unable to earn during the lockdown and economy as a whole suffers since most of the production activities are halted. Besides, avoiding the social gathering of day-to-day life, in which individuals were used to, and living an isolated life with 'trimmed commodities' may affect their mental health. A sudden shifting from 'more is better' preference pattern to 'adjusting with subsistence' may seem difficult for many.

Dealing with Pandemic: Lessons from Gandhian Thought

Now if we look into the Gandhian thoughts of 'Swaraj', we find that Gandhi emphasised on the self-sufficient and hygienic ashram life for the development. In ashram life people can live with the spiritual idealism. The ashram included small farms and houses constructed by the inhabitants themselves and the community and manage economic resources and property. Moreover, in Gandhi's view perfect health depends on exercise, proper diet, and good personal and community hygiene. Basically, the Gandhian idea of Swaraj is a concept of self-sufficient individualism. Amid of the current pandemic situation, we can practice such a healthy way of living to avoid the mental stress and anxiety due to the unprecedented emergency. We should practise a positive thinking in these isolated episodes of day to day living. Besides we must prepare as a self-reliant society, once this phase is gone. It is imperative to put stress in creating and strengthening human healthcare infrastructure at the grass roots level. Only self-sufficiency of the society can give its people a better future.

According to Gandhiji, if we want to achieve holistic development then must make the village self-contained and in turn it would be possible if all individuals of the society work together and produce basic necessary things which are required day to day life like food, cloth, basic education, health, sanitation etc. This system must be based on moral sense and mutual co-operation. So, Gandhiji rely on development of the society motivated by 'sarvodaya' or 'the betterment of all' at the village. With a self-sufficient



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village economy, the distressed migration of the labours can be checked. Migrated labours are facing severe hurdle during the current pandemic situation. These plights could have been addressed with the self-dependent village economy model.

Conclusion

A healthy population does undoubtedly contribute to economic growth and development of a country. The Gandhian idea of Swaraj has a strong foundation in strengthening the local health. At present, to combat the pandemic situation we must follow the basic preventive measures, lockdown strictly. But at the same time, if we want to overcome this existential crisis, we should maintain hygiene life, have too self-sufficient. In a sense, the Gandhian thoughts are very meaningful and helpful during this period and for a better future. For example, at present, the whole world is struggling to procure necessary medical equipment, but only a few countries have the stock. India in many cases is depending on China for raw material. So, Gandhi's principle is very relevant here as it stressed on self-reliance at the local level. The Gandhian way stressed on development of community health and holistic health education, the concept of Non-violence has an impact on making mental health, the simple Ashram life living can be a way out for avoiding lifestyle diseases. As a whole the approach is to empower individuals, families, and communities to take care of their health.

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