

## INDIAN EXPERIENCE OF COVID -19: ITS SPREAD, IMPACT AND THE LESSONS THAT INDIA SHOULD LEARN FROM THE PANDEMIC

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### ABSTRACT

*COVID-19 is one of the most devastating pandemics that human history has witnessed in the recent past .It shook the World to its core by taking away millions of lives within a few weeks of its spread. India has lost around 5 lac people to the virus till now. More than 5 million people World over has lost their battles of life to the COVID-19.In a time span of two years this has not only caused the human loss, it has also badly affected the economic growth, businesses, education, employment, healthcare administration in the country .It has failed India on so many dimensions. The study focuses on the pattern of spread of this virus in India, its impact on people and the society as a whole .It also highlights the areas where India should improve as a country and should have some learning from this virus as we move ahead in policy making ,social sector spending ,disaster preparedness and so on. The battle is not over yet every now the then we come across some new variant of COVID-19, Omicron being the latest one .There is a need to have better preparedness strategies in order to deal with this virus and the losses it can cause .India has done considerably well in few areas keeping in view the population of the country .But at the same time we got exposed on so many fronts. And looking at the current scenario we should be well prepared in order to deal with any sort of problems in the future caused by this virus.*

**KEYWORDS:** COVID-19, Economic Growth, Healthcare Administration, Pandemic, Preparedness.

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### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Nations, economies, people, lives all over the globe in last two –three years .A virus which is believed to be originate in China, the city of Wuhan. In December, 2019 there were many cases of pneumonia reported in Wuhan, a city of China and ultimately it was found that this is caused by a virus which was later termed as coronavirus. Then a case of similar kind was found in Thailand, the first recorded case outside of China. After a detailed assessment of the severity of the spread and looking at the infection levels WHO found that this virus can be considered as a pandemic. ICTV (International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses) announced a name for the new virus on Feb, 11, 2020 “severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)”, It was given this name because the virus is genetically resembles to the coronavirus responsible for the SARS outbreak in the year 2003. Similarly, WHO gave “COVID-19” name to this disease (World Helath Organization, 2020).The virus

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spread like a fire in the jungle and forced countries to impose lockdowns and seal their border. More than 200 countries around the World have been affected by this pandemic. In most of the countries there are lockdown and national emergency. There have been travel restrictions to curb the spread of the virus As on date the total number of coronavirus cases as on date 26<sup>th</sup> August 2022 is there have been 596,873,121 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 6,459,684 deaths, reported to WHO (WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2022) Indian government implemented a 55-days lockdown throughout the country that started on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020, to reduce the transmission of the virus. This outbreak will have a direct impact on the economy of the county. (S. Udhaya Kumar, 2020).

## **Review of Literature:**

**(Sarita Azad, 2020)** In her study highlighted that, the spread of COVID-19 in India got intensified mainly because of the International travels during the early stages of its spread with the very first patient travelling from Wuhan, China. And how the contacts of first few positive cases further aggravated the problems and a significant spread was identified in states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka

**(Sameer Singhal, 2021)** Discusses the different modes of transmission of this virus, and also made a comparison with the previous viral diseases SARS and MERS. He also suggested some of the strategies that can be adopted for controlling; reduce the ongoing transmission of this virus in community contacts, especially in context to India.

**(Chaudhary M, 2020)** In this Study the focus is on assessing the impact of COVID-19 on different sectors if economy such as aviation, tourism, retail, capital markets, MSMEs etc. And how travel restrictions has affected the tourism and hospitality sector witnessing a negative growth.

**(Kumar, 2020)** Has discussed about the impact of virus which has led to issues related to healthcare infrastructure, food insecurities, domestic issues, mental and physical health, effect on education, effects on labor class, monetary issues, economic slowdown etc. It talks about the issues that are being face by the government in providing services as well as the problems being encountered by the general public.

**(Wang C, 2021)** Has dealt with the mental health status of people during the COVID-19 pandemic .Researchers in this study has taken seven middle income countries in for this from Asia in Asia (China, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam).And they found that stress and anxiety depends upon factors like age, place of living, family support and so on .Among these Thailand was most affected and Vietnam was least affected

**(Son C, 2020)** Talks about how pandemic and lockdown has caused a lot of issue for the students and educational institutions with special reference to higher educations. And the findings of study stresses upon the fact that there is need of timely interventions to develop infrastructure that will help students to cater to their educational needs and preventive strategies to address the mental health of college students.

**(Gulati, 2021)** This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related nationwide lockdown on the Indian economy, particularly on food systems. It also takes up an important issue of millions of migrant workers in India who seem to have suffered the most

during this period. The situation about their livelihood. Income and food security is analyzed by conducting a survey of 2917 migrant workers in six different states of India.

### **Objectives:**

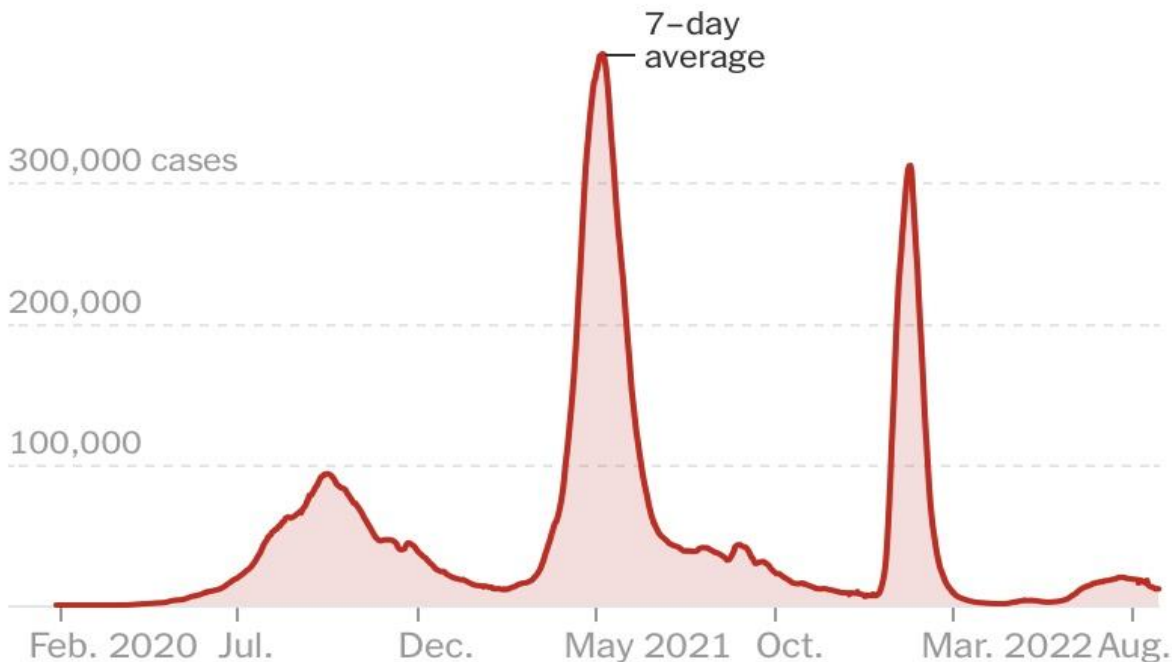
- To know about the pattern of spread of the COVID-19 in India.
- To study the impact of COVID -19 on people and the society as a whole.
- To come up with policy prescription and suggestion to deal with any such situation and lessons that India should learn from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

### **Research Methodology**

The study is solely based upon the secondary data .The secondary data sources used to gather the information for the study consist of journal articles ,newspapers ,books ,websites ,working papers reports of different ministries and departments and international bodies .These secondary data sources are analyzed in a systematic way to draw generalization .

### **Spread of COVID-19 in India:**

In India the first case of COVID-19 was reported on January 30, 2020 in Kerala and after that there was a rapid increase in the cases from mid-march onwards. A nationwide lockdown in India was imposed on March 25, 2020, which brought life to a standstill nearly all travel, commercial human activities across the country were suspended by the government. However the government has issued international travel advisories from January 2020 even before any of the cases were reported in the country. The government at a very early stage ensured mandatory compliance with travel restrictions and quarantines, rolled out mass awareness campaigns on hygiene and social distancing, and imposed a national lockdown to control the spread of infections. Given the complexities of the Indian context and the fears of the devastation the virus could cause, the swift, decisive and strictly imposed restrictions may have contributed to saving lives in the long run (UNICEF, 2021).Lockdown which was declared for 21 days initially , starting on March 25th,2020, and the same was extended until May 3rd, 2020, keeping in view an increasing number of positive cases, Thereafter the lockdown has been extended for the third time until May 17th, 2022 (Business Line ).In India, from 3, January 2020 to 24, August 2022, there have been 44,368,195 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 527,452 deaths, reported to WHO. As of 15 August 2022, a total of 2, 10, 82, 34, 347vaccine doses have been administered.



	DAILY AVG. ON AUG. 24	14-DAY CHANGE	TOTAL REPORTED
Cases	11,437	-33%	44,378,920
Deaths	40	-19%	527,488

**Source:** New York Times, Tracking Coronavirus in India: Latest Map and Case Count

**Data Source:** The data for India comes from the [Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University](#). Population data from [ESRI](#).

Daily cases means the number of cases reported each day .The seven-day average includes data from previous six days and the current day. (The new york times , 2022)

As we can make out from the figure that India has reached its peak in May 2021 in terms of COVID cases recorded .Then after that there was a gradual fall in the cases and death but in the span of these two and half years the World has seen so much devastation mainly because of the lives lost during this time. And on top of that time and gain there have been different variants of virus emerging as a result of mutation which has further aggravated the situation .Similar in India there was a shortage of bed for patients ,oxygen cylinders , to the worst of the things the virus has created a situation where people who not bid a final goodbye to their loved ones ,they cannot perform the last rites .However, similar was the case in many of the developed countries like USA ,UK , Italy ,where there were crisis of healthcare services or we can say that the virus was incurable to a limit situation was going out of hand.SARS-CoV-2 can spread through both direct means (droplet and human-to-human transmission) and by indirect contact (contaminated objects

and airborne contagion). Meanwhile personal protective equipment (PPE) could also be the source of airborne infections (Liu Y, 2020). World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that educating people about the spread of the virus, isolation, prevention mechanism, controlling the transmission, and timely treatment of infected persons are the critical steps in controlling contagious diseases like COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2020). Time and again many advisories were issued internationally and within India which include keeping yourself within your homes, avoiding any direct contact with healthy people (as a person can be asymptomatic as well) or infected person, avoiding travelling if not essential following social distancing rules like avoiding crowded public places and maintaining at least two meters of distance between each person, especially if they are coughing or sneezing, avoiding shaking hands when greeting others, frequently washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or hand sanitizer especially after touching common surface areas, using the bathroom, avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands; and disinfecting surfaces using household sprays or wipes. It was also recommended that due to the asymptomatic nature and long incubation period using a medical mask (especially N95) or a respirator (especially FFP3) can help immensely in protection against the virus. Sterilization of respirator, and proper disposal of the used masks, PPE kits have been strongly recommended by the experts (Lotfi, 2020)

## **Impact of COVID-19**

COVID-19 virus has caused plenty of damage all over the world. Loss of human life was the main one, except that it's also caused problems like economic instability, food security, mental pressure, stress, burden on healthcare, people losing jobs. There is no domain in the society which has remained untouched from the ill effects of this deadly virus. The virus has had a big socio-economic impact globally (Keni Raghuvir, 2020). Some of the major impact of the pandemic on the Indian society can be included under following heads:

**Economic Impact:** The most disastrous ill effect this virus apart from the loss of so many lives was the economic setback that countries all over the globe. Because of the lockdowns and travel restrictions there was huge impact on the imports/exports globally. Many people lost their livelihood as the multinational companies were running into losses. It has left many people without any work. It was difficult for people to make ends meet. Due to all these factors there was steep fall in the economic growth trends of the country. Some of the sectors of the economy has seen a negative trend making it even more difficult for the business and the people to survive. COVID-19 will bring crisis on several economic and non-economic fronts over the world. There would be demand and provide gap because of trade restriction and labor mobility. In India, there would be consequence on 81% people employed within the informal sector. Due to the pandemic-induced lockdown, the Indian economy contracted 24 percent within the first quarter of the financial year (FY) 2020-21 (April-June). The UN warned that the coronavirus pandemic is predicted to have a significant adverse impact on global economy, and most importantly, GDP growth of India I expected to witness a fall of 4.8 percent.

**Tourism Industry :** Tourism industry has experienced the major shock due to COVID-19. With lockdown and travel restrictions imposed everywhere the world this industry suffered a lot. Based upon some estimates the tourism arrivals in several parts of the World gone down to 90% making it worse for the industry to survive. Many people associated with industry lost their jobs. In India, the travel and tourism industry is flourishing and is contributing sizably to the economy. The FICCI-Yes Bank report titled 'India Inbound Tourism: Unlocking the Opportunities'

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described India as a tourism powerhouse and therefore the largest market in South Asia. Tourism in India accounted for 9.2 per cent of GDP and had generated US\$247.3 billion in 2018, with the creation of 26.7 million jobs. Currently, it's the 8th largest country in terms of contribution to GDP. Tourism and aviation, these two industries are dealing with severe cash flow issues since the start of the pandemic and are staring at a potential 38 million lay-offs, which translates to 70 percent of the workforce (Upadhyay, 2021).

**Impact of on Migratory Labour:** The migratory laborers like constructions workers, daily wagers suffered plenty during the COVID times. They were not getting any work all over the country they did not have enough money for food. The situation was such that they travelled back to their homes on feet carrying their luggage for days. The pandemic has put these people under extreme poverty. The International Labour Organization (ILO) in its report describes the coronavirus pandemic as 'the worst global crisis since war II'. About 400 million people (76.2% of the entire workforce) working in the informal economy in India are at a risk of falling deeper into poverty due to catastrophic consequences of the virus. Even at the world level as there were lockdowns in order to curb the spread of virus, it led to loss of jobs for people involved in informal sector and other low or medium paid jobs.

**Policy and Programme Implications:** Coronavirus pandemic has forced the governments everywhere the World to change their policies and investment decisions. It has severe implication on the demands coordinated fiscal and monetary policies of the government. Pandemic has raised the expenditure up to 10% in few countries on healthcare for providing masks, gloves, testing kits, personal protection equipment, ventilators, ICU beds, quarantine wards, medicines and other equipment would mean an enormous increase in healthcare spending. Public spending on healthcare in India is nearly 1.3 per cent of GDP is pre COVID time which has increased by 73% during COVID making it 2.1-2.2%. The government has declared a relief package of ₹1,700 billion, which will be used to make cash transfers to the poor and vulnerable sections of the society. Fiscal receipts could drop in at least 2 per cent of GDP. The crisis emerging from the coronavirus spread will pull down investment and consumption demand. Support to different sectors will need to be given as a measure to boost investment demand.

**Impact on Start-Ups and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise:** Micro, Small and Medium enterprises, which have created quite 90 per cent of the jobs in India and contributing 30 per cent of the GDP are at the danger of having a severe cash crunch if the lockdowns are continued in this manner only. Many of those MSMEs have loan obligations and monthly EMIs to pay. They got moratorium for loan repayments. RBI has released funds to non-banking financial corporations, a number of whom provide finance to MSMEs. Additionally to that, movement of perishable goods is hampered and thus, these businesses stare at huge losses. India cannot have a sustainable and lasting growth without the active participation of MSMEs in India. It becomes important that during such crisis like situation the government should come forward to help these businesses to sustain and provide them with additional support in the form of relaxation in EMI payment and other financial matters.

**Education and Learning:** The pandemic changed the way how people use to learn before it, the whole system of teaching learning had undergone drastic changes with lessons being delivered in the online mode. The institutions were forced to shut down with the fear of spread of the virus. It has put in question the preparedness and technological adaptations of the institutions in India

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.At the same time highlighted the need for training of teachers and students to use such technology and applications. The students were uncertain about their future and concerned about their studies .A the same times it caused problem for taxers as well .Majority of teachers in India were not familiar with these CT enabled applications as they are more comfortable with classroom teaching environment .Similarity, the digitalization and the penetration of internet in rural areas also added to the existing problems for students and teachers .Parents were also under stress to provide these facilities to their wards .Only 32 per cent of the rural population of 12+ years and 54 per cent of urban population had internet access, and that only 11 per cent of Indian households have computers such as desktops, laptops and tablets (excluding smart phones) (UNICEF, 2021).All in all ,the pandemic disturbed the whole teaching learning scenario in India.

**Food Insecurity:** Malnutrition has been a big issue in India for years now even before the pandemic. As per the Global Nutrition Report 2020, India is home to half of the world's malnourished children or those who suffer from low weight for height. This has been aggravated further because of the pandemic. The report from Independent Accountability Panel (IAP) projects that debilitation because of malnutrition could increase by 10–50%, because of COVID-19. With the shutdown of schools, 370 million children worldwide are missing out on mid-day meals, which, in many cases, are the sole nutritious meal these children probably have in a day. In India, while some states are trying to continue mid-day meals schemes by give out ration to school children, dry ration cannot replace warm cooked meals provided in schools. Not only children the daily wagers, small roadside businesses were also suffering from the food shortages .it was difficult for them to make ends meet because they exhausted their savings and most importantly their homes run on their day to day income which was not happening during the COVID because of the complete shutdown .Even after the lockdown when they were allowed to operate people were skeptical to eat outside food with the fear of coronavirus.

**More screen time:** The pandemic has led to the greater usage of smartphone and electronic gadgets. With students attending their classes online it has given them an excuse that it is compulsion for them to put in more time with their smartphone and the gadgets .This will create severe health issues in the years to come with more and more screen addiction .Moreover , it will definitely going to have a bad effect on the eyesight of the students and even at the teachers as well ,as spending more watching the screen will definitely going to affect eyesight ,sleep pattern and will cause other health related issues. Nearly 1500 parents in Canada in the month of April 2020 raised serious concern about the physical activity, screen time and sleep habits of their wards (Hulick, 2020) . Prolonged Screen exposure has an impact of brain development and the sleeping habits among the children specially the younger ones. It can further lead to numerous health related problems and can affect the overall development of the child (Wong, 2021).The problem of screen time is not only with students or teacher only everyone have been doing their work from home with the use of computers which has created health issues for people .

**Feeling of Isolation among People :**Man is a social animals holds true as we human cannot live in isolation we need family people to talk with and share things .But during the pandemic people were Sitting at home ,students were attending classes via online mode , employees were doing work from home Thereby, it was creating a void in the life of people as they are locked within their homes in front of their phone and laptop screens which gave rise to a feeling of isolation and anxiety which has affected the health of people with serious implications related to psychological and mental well-being .This was one of the most serious concern during the

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COVID -19 that people are in a state of shock and on top of that they are in isolation not able to share this with anyone, confined to their homes. Similarly for students those these online classes is absence of social interaction among students, the home environment which can never become an office or the school environment, including poor network connection and insufficient data bandwidth, and lack of motivation and efforts towards the active learning. The students do collaborate in digital groups but those organic connections were missing. (Almendingen K, 2021). The pandemic has negatively impacted diet, sleep routines, and physical activity among children, heightening the danger of obesity. As per reports, 30% of youngsters or parents who are under quarantine or isolation suffer from acute stress disorder, depression, and other problems.

### **Lessons India should learn from COVID-19:**

The corona pandemic has given humankind a loud and clear message that there is no point in getting involved in useless fights. Grudges, race for money influence, power. We need to value people around us, nurture the relationships we have with people. Invest in your health, have love and compassion towards other, treat people well. The situation created by the virus has taught us so many things which we take for granted in life. Other than these lessons and learning for life it has the things that should be kept in mind learning from this virus are as follows:

**Internet is the Future:** Every coin has a flipside to it similar is the case with internet. It has exposed us to more screen time but at the same time is something which can be considered as important as important as oxygen. It was all because of internet that students could continue with their studies, Doctors were consulted online, many important decisions, meetings were held online when it was not feasible to meet physically. So it shows how internet could be a savior for crisis like situation and help us immensely. So what we need to work as a country is we need to ensure that we increase the internet penetration to the remotest of the areas, make sure that the speed of the internet is satisfactory. Digitalization is something which cannot be ignored in the modern times so increasing digital literacy will also be crucial for this internet access. Make educational institutions, hospitals Wi-Fi enabled.

**Actions towards Climate Change:** Climate change and COVID-19, however two different issues but have few commonalities like both are global, do not respect national boundaries & they both allow countries to work together to find solutions. The COVID-19 crisis has also taught us how working together can help in damage control and can bring things under control. (Sonali Wavare, 2021). Similarly, we should take conscious effort towards climate change also as it can prove out to be very fatal in decades to come. We need to resort to more sustainable options of living, act responsibly. Everyone has witnessed during the lockdown time there were articles about the fact that scientific community nature is healing, pollution levels are low, noise is less. All this because humans were confined to their homes, vehicular traffic was not there. However, it is not like humans should confine themselves to their homes then only we will contribute to climate changes. It simply means that we need to act more responsibly. Look at the sustainable options of living life and act more sensibly towards nature and wildlife.

**Health and the Economy Are Closely Linked:** A healthy individual or Population is a vital for economic growth. It is estimated that during the pandemic world economies had spent nearly 10% of their GDP on health services. Still there were hospitals running out of beds, ventilators, essential medicines. So it The Lesson to be learnt from this is health infrastructure, health budget should not only be seen as a cost but an investment for future. Ultimately it the human



which will contribute to the economic growth and if human are not healthy it will hamper the economic activities and growth. Therefore, post COVID-19 pandemic we have to make sure that we upgrade the health infrastructure within our country to a level where it can deal with any such shocks in the future, it will require gradual improvements, planning. There is need to increase our investment in health sector which at present stands at 6% of the GDP.

**Global cooperation is a Must:** COVID-19 has once again highlighted the importance of global cooperation and international relations from sharing health data to solving global supply chain issues all these were important tasks during the spread of COVID-19. There was a time when things were falling apart for many of the countries with shortage of medicine .PPE kits, even sanitizers .Countries came forwards during this to help each other fulfill their requirement and help in the treatment .Same was the case during Vaccination drive when countries with more production capacity supplied COVID vaccine to other nations. Which bring us to the pit that global cooperation is very important to deal with any issue .Every country has The dependency for ideas ,technology ,information & research because no nation can have all areas covered with same levels of perfection.

**Education Requires a Paradigm Shift:** Many a times the importance of education and a well-informed society is highlighted and it is being said that everyone is entitled to education and government is doing a lot in this concerned area. But pandemic like these have raise serious questions on our preparedness for education .Many developing countries like India faced issues in relation to imparting the education to the students during COVID. The shift to the virtual classrooms was not easy .at first place many of the institutions does not have that mechanism to support online teaching and learning. Secondly, the digital divide is here is rural-urban population .Third the use of mobile, laptops was not possible for every student keeping in mind their financial conditions .Fourthly students –teachers were not trained to use any such platforms .Therefore, COVID has caused problems on so many fronts and highlighted the need for better strategies, training programs, financial support to poor, IT enabled institutions etc. So there is a need to have paradigm shift in the approach of imparting education .Blended mode of education, classroom education mixed with online teaching can be a future course of action for better preparedness .

**The Role of Media in Public Awareness:** Media is believed to be the fourth pillar in any democracy because it helps in highlighting the problems of people and draw the attention of policy makers towards the issues .During any crisis like situation it can play a vital role by providing necessary information to the people so that they can take necessary steps to save their lives .In the times of COVID also media was instrumental in supplying people with information which is important to them including governmental interventions, public awareness of how to minimize the spread of the ,what steps to follow to curb it and what doctors have to say about the virus. But there were bogus remedies, myths and misinformation that have cost lives like never before. So media has to be responsible enough to shy away from spreading any such rumors and avoid any fear mongering in the mind of people .Scientist ,doctors ,administrators and people concerned with any such crisis like situation should be given opportunity to state the fact in TV ,newspaper and facts should be checked correctly .

The COVID-19 Pandemics in so many ways was a wakeup call for the humankind that how collective actions can save lives of people and every global concern has to be dealt with

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cooperation and collective action. Lockdowns caused due to pandemic led to decrease in pollution levels at some places, portraying a picture of human destruction caused to the planet earth. Therefore, humankind – more than before – should stand together to tackle increasing rates of pollution and its harmful consequences. Climate change is one the biggest global issue and response to deal with it should match the intensity of the issue. Global standards and laws for environmental conservation should be reviewed at higher global levels with better monitoring and evaluation (World Economic Forum, 2021). Communication is very important aspect of policy implantation and awareness about that policy or action is equally important. During the time of COVID the Prime Minister of India and Minister's of different states established this communication with the people directly. As they took the lead in this people have also taken it seriously, realizing the importance of social distancing or lockdown. Government might frame some great policy or programme but communicating it to the people, giving information about that plays a vital role in its success. A poorly communicated policy decision is like a policy half cooked which will not benefit people no matter how good your intentions are as government or policy makers. (Trivedi, 2020). In addition to all these it should also be realized that we need to stress more upon research and development. We should increase our capacity in pharma production also keeping in view our population, irrespective of being one of the giants in pharma industry. Taking nothing away from our government, leadership and the administration irrespective of such huge population we have managed the pandemic well in comparison to so many other well developed nations. India and China, despite being most population-dense national, have managed to constrain the infection rate by the implementation of a complete lockdown with arrangements in place to manage the confirmed cases. (Keni Raghuvir, 2020)

## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic taught humankind so many important lessons some for the good and some for the bad. It has disrupted the economies all over the world. It has burdened the healthcare system of nations including India. But as they say we human do not have control over everything around us, things like nature, diseases, disasters can take away lives anywhere anytime. But the important part is we as a country have done considerably well while dealing with the virus, keeping in view the population of the country. We were early to act to the spreading virus and lockdown helped immensely in breaking the chain of spread. However, there is no denying in the fact that precious human lives were lost, people were under stress, suicidal tendencies were on a rise, businesses failed miserably. But still we have done a decent job in dealing with the virus. The vaccination drives in India and planning for it was well executed. Relaxations were given to people in payment of EMIs, bills, rent during the difficult times. Presently however we have overcome the difficult phase but the virus is still here with us, few cases being reported everyday but the seriousness of the cases has gone down in vaccinated people which is a good sign. This virus has given us a new way of looking at things, appreciating life, value what we have. But at the same time exposed us on so many fronts in terms of preparedness to deal with any such diseases. The need of the hour is to focus more on research and development and upgrade our healthcare system and practices.

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