

## COVID-19 AND “NEW NORMAL”

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### ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic is hitting the world at different paces in different parts. It has not only caused mammoth amount of deaths but also devastated the economy of the world. In May 2020, the Asian Development Bank announced that this pandemic could cost the global economy between \$5.8 and \$8.8 trillion. Countries are making efforts to reopen the businesses and other institutions but parallel to it, the spread of Covid-19 is accelerating at skyrocket pace. New strain of corona virus found recently in UK has been reported as having 17 mutations in the genome and is 56 % more transmissible. More than 50 vaccines for Covid-19 are being tested around the world with at least 80 others in earlier stages of development. The leading vaccines have already been approved fully or for emergency use in some countries. As Covid-19 is expected to stay for long, life has to be managed along with it but with a difference. This difference would be our *new normal* where we would have to continue wearing masks, sanitizing our hands and our surroundings repeatedly. People would come to rely on the concept of “work from home” and “online learning”. When there is still no sure shot cure or treatment for Covid-19, the importance of Ayurveda has emerged as people are trying to find out some respite in the form of Tulsi, Giloy and other natural remedies. People have learnt the importance of good health and started prioritizing home-made foods to ensure the strengthening of their immune system.

Since time immemorial, changes have been happening around man and influenced his life in different ways. May these changes be environmental calamities or cultural transitions; man has always built himself up and acclimatized. May be it's the man's resilience or his struggle for existence that he copes up with almost everything or situation. We hear about floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornados etc. but they always affect a particular place, city or country. Help always pours in from different parts of the country or even adjoining nations.

The situation is different in current Covid-19 phase or at least seems different in the present scenario. This pandemic has affected every nook and corner of the world. The magnitude of this effect is huge and would result in an abysmal impact on the human race. It has not only caused mammoth amount of deaths but also devastated the economy of the world. Lockdowns by various countries to “flatten the curve” of the infection led to confining millions of citizens to their homes, shutting down businesses and ceasing almost all social and economic activities. In May 2020, the Asian

Development Bank announced that Covid-19 could cost the global economy between \$5.8 and \$8.8 trillion.<sup>[1]</sup> India's growth in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year 2020 went down to 3.1% according to the Ministry of Statistics.<sup>[2]</sup>

As of now, many countries are easing their restrictions to stabilize their economies and unlocking their cities. Although efforts are being made to reopen the businesses, parallel to it, the spread of Covid-19 is accelerating at skyrocket pace. Globally, as of 10:25am CEST, 29 December 2020, there have been 79,931, 215 confirmed cases of Covid-19, including 1,765,265 deaths, with India having 10,224,303 confirmed cases and 148,153 deaths, reported to WHO.<sup>[3]</sup> New strain of corona virus found recently in UK has been reported as having 17 mutations in the genome and is 56 % more transmissible.<sup>[4]</sup>

Researchers all over the world are burning mid night oil to come up with a solution in the form of a vaccine to fight with it. More than 50 vaccines for the covid-19 are being tested in clinical trials around the world with at least 80 others in earlier stages of development. The

leading vaccines have already been approved fully or for emergency use in some countries and more approvals are expected over the coming months.<sup>[5]</sup> Till then and even after that life is not going to change much. Covid-19 is expected to stay for long and life has to be managed along with it but with a difference.

Many diseases like HIV and common cold for which we still have no cure but we have learned to live with it. Nevertheless, the situation with Covid-19 is a lot more challenging as it continues to evolve rapidly. Therefore, our level of adaptation and the changes we have to make in our lives is much higher and this is going to be our “new normal”. Some of the changes, which everyone would have to adopt, might be as followings;

### **1. Necessity of wearing masks and usage of sanitizers**

It is certain that “new normal” would keep changing for a longer period. To avoid any chance of catching up with disease, we would have to continue with wearing masks and sanitizing our hands repeatedly. Even if it is not made mandatory at the government end, to keep ourselves safe, we will have to wear masks whenever going out, focus on sanitizing our surroundings, our workplace, and wash our hands with soap or use a good quality sanitizer, repeatedly.

### **2. Incorporation of concept of “work from home (WFH)”**

The novel Coronavirus changed everything overnight, the lockdown was enforced, and social distancing became the new norm. With the lockdown in place, more than 3 billion people, excluding the essential workers like defense and healthcare officials, have been pushed to work from home. Corporations and authorities around the world have no other option than providing flexible working conditions including WFH. It is one of the biggest changes, the world has ever witnessed. In trying times like these, WFH is a savior for many companies that would have otherwise shut down and cost billions of professionals their jobs. Many companies and organizations have already been practicing WFH even before the outbreak of Covid-19. Even government sector been previously reluctant has embraced it for betterment. In future, companies and corporate sectors may club physical attendance with virtual meetings and it may go for long.

### **3. Online-learning -a regular practice**

Online learning and teaching involves a diverse array of tools, resources, pedagogical approaches, roles, organizational arrangements and forms of interaction, monitoring and support—with many possible combinations of substitution and integration.<sup>[6-8]</sup> Educationists have made all the efforts in this period of Corona to learn various techniques to make education accessible to their students living in remote areas even. Becoming tech savvy has imparted a new dimension in their growth. They would definitely continue with this

practice along with their classroom teaching. Moreover, online learning has done value addition in their year’s long old method of teaching and learning. Other than this, digital platforms are allowing customized teaching for individuals and education would become much more personalized. Even after the Corona phase would be over, online learning will remain in practice.

### **4. Low profile celebrations**

The global pandemic and the social-distancing policies that have been put up in place to curb the spread of COVID-19 have effectively ruled out large gatherings and made many people, in particular the elderly, much more hesitant to go far from home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still recommends that Americans cancel gatherings of more than 10 people “for organizations that serve higher-risk populations,” and many states have imposed limits on the number of people who can gather for any sort of party or event.<sup>[9]</sup> In India too, in middle and upper class homes, birthdays, anniversaries, festivals and even pre-wedding celebrations have gone virtual after March 25, when the lockdown came into force.<sup>[10]</sup> Baisakhi, Eid, Independence day and many more and now Ganesh Chaturthi have been kept as low profile celebrations by the government. People are getting tuned to all this and in the present scenario it is assumed that even after covid-19, people will prefer to avoid extravagant festivities.

### **5. Health consciousness**

Realization of surviving in the existing pandemic when there is no sure shot cure or treatment for Covid- 19, people have become very much health conscious. They have learnt that body with strong immunity can fight against the virus. Many people earlier had the habit of frequent dining outside or utilizing the services of Zomato or Swiggy for home delivering fast food and calorie rich soft drinks. Now with the fear in mind, people have started focusing more on home made as well as healthy foodstuffs. Consequently, they feel themselves becoming more energetic and fitter as compared to earlier. This has made people learn the importance of good health and healthy food to keep their immunity high.

### **6. Eco friendly attitude**

In the total shutdown phase when sirens of factories were silent, there was no vehicle on the road, we all observed the purity and freshness in the environment. About 40% to 50% improvement in air quality was identified just after four days of commencing lockdown in Delhi.<sup>[11]</sup> Nature was at its best. When everything was halted, nature was blooming and it attracted people too. The beauty of nature which otherwise was going un-noticed in the packed daily schedule of all of us, got noticed. Lockdown has turned many into avid gardeners exploring their green side. With more time at one’s disposal, a large number of people are adopting healthy

hobbies and taking interest in nurturing their kitchen gardens on terrace or balconies.

### 7. Importance to Ayurveda

As doctors and health experts have been suggesting people to eat immunity-booster food these days in order to stay fit and active, plants such as tulsi (Basil), brahmi (water hyssop), ashwagandha (winter cherry), giloy (heart-leaved moonseed) and lemongrass, are in high demand. Nursery owners say that their business has now picked up and the orders for these plants were pouring in on a daily basis. According to The Economic Times, Covid-19 has led to an increase in demand for immunity boosting Ayurveda products. Baidyanath group logged a three-fold jump in their products whereas, Dabur has seen seven-fold increase in their products.<sup>[12]</sup>

The pandemic has brought important lessons and opportunities for everyone at both personal as well as professional end. In the past few years, we have had serious epidemics with new pathogens. Scientists, opinion leaders (e.g., Bill Gates), and World Health Organization (WHO) experts have warned that an unprepared world may face a nightmarish pandemic that no one seems to listen to, here is a quote from a report by the WHO published last year and reads like written today:

*“A rapidly spreading pandemic due to a lethal respiratory pathogen.... poses additional preparedness requirements. Donors and multilateral institutions must ensure adequate investment in development of innovative vaccines and therapeutics, surge manufacturing capacity, broad-spectrum antivirals, and appropriate non-pharmaceutical interventions.”*<sup>[13]</sup>

The world is more globalized and so more vulnerable too. Connectivity has dissolved the borders among countries transcending the barriers of distance. Failure in one country is a failure for the whole world; therefore, one needs to remain alert and prepared for such pandemics in future too. Even after the Covid-19 is over, we need to follow all the recommended guidelines besides keeping ourselves fitter and healthier.

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