

IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN THE SOCIETY AND CULTURE OF ASSAM AND ITS FUTURE

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Abstract

The recent Outbreak of the Covid-19 from the Wuhan region of China has brought the critical situation and crisis to human species around the world. The issue of 'Human Security' has brought about the global crisis. It is now under discussion. There are new challenges around the world in the field of disease and treatment. The development of a health sector rather than military power can first protect the citizens of a country or nation. The same has been taught to the People of this generation. Basically, as a biological disaster, the disease has hit the socio-cultural and economic infrastructure of the world. 'Vasant roga' was recognized as a former world outbreak. The overall environment of the Concomitant outbreak after polio, plague, Spanish flu has caused a long-term crisis in the international economy, politics and health. The SARS-CoV-2 or the COVID-19 that affect more than 195 countries around the world at the same time are also challenges the scientific development of the world's advanced capitalist countries. ² The overall contribution of education technology and the discovery have been questioned. Out of the 195 countries around the world 84 countries have to be on the lock down.

This is the first time in human civilization that so many countries are under lockdown. In this terrible situation every nation is moving towards economic slowdown. International communication, imports and exports have been stopped. There is a terrible danger to every government, private sector associated with labour and farmer class as well as the other professions. How will the future of a developing nation like India and a developing state like Assam be in this situation? How will this affect the society, literature and culture of Assam? The proposed issue is being researched for an academic discussion on the same.

Keywords: Lockdown, Assam, Culture, Influence.

Introduction

SARC CoV-2 was first identified in the city of Wuhan in China's Hubei province in 2019. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared the incident as a global pandemic. ³

The virus is primarily act like influenza being sneezing and coughing main symptoms. Mainly this is transmitted by human touch and respiratory particles while exhaling or sneezing. These germs usually remain alive in the body of the host for five days from being infected. Sometimes two to fourteen days are dormant in the body, then only the symptoms of the disease start to appear.⁴ Fever, cough and problems in breathing are the primary symptoms of the disease. Acute respiratory pain syndrome is also prominent.⁵ Vaccines or special viral treatments for the disease are not available so far, although medicines are being investigated. This disease can be prevented by taking protective measures such as keeping away from the infected people and checking the suspects and keeping them safe for 14 days. India along with 84 other countries around the world has declared "lockdown" to prevent the spread of this disease.⁶

Effects of Covid-19 on Assam's society culture

There will be a major change in the social framework of Assam after the situation of Covid-19 gets over. It will bring about a major change in the social and economic structure of the next world. Similarly, it will affect Nature to religion, education, health, transport, tourism, business, sectors of industry etc. The most challenging aspect of Covid-19 in the coming years in India is the solution to problem of unemployment.

Lockdown has been declared across India since 25th March, 2020.⁷ India has been in lockdown for more than 70 days so far. People from various states of India have lost their jobs during lockdown and returned to their own states. More than 150 migrant workers in India have already lost their lives due to accidents and shortages of food on their way home.⁸ Like the other states of the country, the farmer class of the state of Assam and the daily wage labourer face scarcity of food and clothes. The lack of money during the lockdown has led to increase of suicidal cases in Assam. And there will be considerable challenges to the employment sector of the state. The country's economy will be damaged if the lockdown is prolonged. The educated youths in parallel with those returning from different countries and states will be depressed mentally.

India's GDP has already dropped in parallel with most of the world's most advanced countries. According to *Economic Times*, India faces a loss of Rs 7.8 crores during the first 21 days of lockdown.⁹ In parallel with the corrupt economy, the 'power' aspect of the state's administrative machinery has also become a matter of concern. From the collection of tax to the decision making of the heads of the nation on every important issue this power can mislead a nation. Any decision that violates human rights or any decision in favour of the ruling party of the country can be converted into law at this point of time.

During the lockdown, the Government of India has done a lot of work for online education and health sector so that the real beneficiaries can avail these facilities. The administration requires must be more effective and aware so that the middlemen cannot take advantage of the government's community plan. Students from the poor category of India have to be out of

online education as they cannot afford electronic gadgets. Students are committing suicide due to lack of mobile phone for online classes.

The government has already been able to provide subsidy for the next two to four months for the unemployed who have lost their jobs from outside the state for the next two to four months. This assistance is to be given to the real beneficiaries. The appropriate measures should be taken by the administration. The government can also engage the media for proper monitoring of this system.

Similarly, religious places, religious meetings or adhesions will grow again in the country in the next period of Covid-19. So the government should keep an eye on religious institutions so that these religious institutions will not again be converted into 'hotspots' areas where Covid-19 can spread. Many people have lost faith in religion during this period by enriching science. This is high time when people can open up new ways of science in society during Covid-19. Malpractices like robbery, pickpockets etc. can happen during this period at large scale. In such a situation the law and order of the country is at a state of emergency. Similarly, no one can take advantage of this period to expand the activities of any national, internationally illegal or banned organization; the Home Department of India needs to be aware of that aspect as well.

Covid-19 may be an opportunity to rebuild Indian and Assamese cultures:

India is so rich in culture and heritage. From *Gita*, *Bhagawad*, *Vedas* to *Upanishads* Indian culture is shown as great. Covid-19 may give us an opportunity to revive the same both in the Nation and the state. Similarly the revival of rural economy and the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi's Gram Swaraj can also be an opportunity for the new generation of India. With the proper implementation of the Panchayatiraj system India can further increase the level of development in rural areas.

Various states of India as well as textile industries in the North-Eastern Region, bamboo cane industry, cotton industry can boost the rural economy. India needs to adopt a different level of sustainable and long-term projects. Similarly, for the cultivation of new crops, raising fisheries, poultry farming, piggery etc. our farmers can take loans from banks. Moreover the 2000 crore rupees announced by the Prime Minister on May 14 for agricultural and seasonal crop production, the new generation of India can become self-dependent.¹⁰ The government may also plan to provide onetime assistance to the farmers.

The Government of India requires strict measures to take to prevent the level of waste products in the industrial sectors. Similarly, the Ministry of Environment and Forests of The Government of India and Assam should enforce the law more strongly in the work of coal mining, forests etc. The outbreak of Covid-19 has taught the world that the human civilization will exist only if we keep nature healthy and clean. Developing infrastructure in the field of health and sanitization is extremely necessary. The state of Assam also needs to focus on building this infrastructure. In modern civilization India needs to focus at least on

education and health over religion. India needs to understand deeply the value and respect of the country rather than the personal benefits and security of the political leaders.

The act of frequent washing of hands with soap that Indians practiced during the lockdown needs to be converted into tradition and law. Earlier the *satriya* tradition of Assam gave importance to such *chaf-chikunta* (cleanliness). One of the progressive religious gurus like Sankardeva taught the people of Assam centuries ago. He was a religious saint who popularized the *Neo Vaishnavism* in Assam. Covid-19 once again proved the need for this cleanliness.

Economic equality and the future of the educated unemployed in Assam:

Covid-19 has challenged the economy of India and Assam. India's GDP rate has dropped considerably along with other nations in the world.¹¹ (Note-The economic crisis India is facing due to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdowns is "probably bigger" than the 1991 balance of payment crisis, which resulted in the country liberalizing its economy, said Nobel Prize-winning economist Abhijeet Banerjee. In an interview to *Huff Post India*, Banerjee, who is the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, also warned that India's gross domestic product (GDP) could go down by 10-15%. Source-https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/abhijit-banerjee-indian-economy-gdp-coronavirus_in_eafda4c5b639d6e5790548)

During the lockdown in every state of India as well as in Assam the market for agriculture and production has been closed. Especially from January to March-April the farmers of Assam are involved in agriculture. But this is the exception. The result will also be exceptional in the coming days. It is certain that the animal care sector in Assam has also been hampered by the production and supply of fish, meat, vegetables etc. The chain of supply has been damaged and without proper imports it will definitely affect the economy of Assam in the next 2021.

Therefore Mahatma Gandhi's economic concept for re-construction of this adverse state of the country's economy the state of Assam has to focus on the self-dependent rural economy. The effectiveness of the self-dependent scientific agricultural system can provide relief to the economic sector of Assam. The role of the Government of Assam and the NGOs must be maximized in the years after Covid-19. The food products from the farmers are bought by middle men and consume a huge profit. The government should find a suitable way to close this field of marketing and purchase the farmer's goods directly. Cooperatives must play a vital role in this.

During the lockdown, the working communities of the country have to move to their own places after losing their jobs. Already many employees have been exempted from work by the owners. People associated with the sectors like Ola, Uber and all other private transport in Assam have also become unemployed. So in the coming days the government will have more unemployed youths. The government of India needs to take a well planned scheme to give these people the right work in a short time. The government must take appropriate measures

to engage these people in the agricultural or other sectors. The government must provide loans for one time assistance so that they can start their own firm. Otherwise the economic situation in Assam will become even more severe.

Problems and future of the education system in Assam:

Covid-19 has destroyed educational network of India as well as Assam. It has proved that not a single discovery in the field of medicine, science and technology of human civilization can beat the nature. Today, the whole world feels the limitations of human civilization. What will be the future of the education system of a developing nation like India during the global crisis? How the future of education in the state of Assam will be? These questions are very difficult to be answered properly at this point of time.

The infrastructure in educational sector of India is weaker than many countries in the world. Similarly India is still far from the advanced countries like China, Japan and the United States of America in terms of vocational education. Therefore, the educational aspect of India will be greatly damaged and this will worsen the mental condition of the teachers' community as well as parents. In the coming days the use of online systems in India as well as the state of Assam will increase although the lack of proper infrastructure required for the online system will not result in the system being effective. This has already been proved. So in parallel with the government of Assam has launched a new system of education to connect the students and teachers through digital medium, students from any background can avail this facility. It is necessary to take special schemes. The problem of network and power supply is also a big problem for the rural areas of Assam. The government must also take appropriate measures to solve this problem. Online courses were taken during Covid-19 although it could not be effective due to the irregularities in the network and electricity. Similarly, the majority of the people of Assam are in the lower middle class. Due to the unavailability of facilities some students had to stay away from this system. If the education system is not implemented successfully, in near future, the entire higher education system in Assam will be taken into the hands of the rich people.

It is uncertain whether education can be provided in higher education institutions in Assam after 'Covid-19' or not. This is a very important subject to be discussed at present. Most of the colleges and hostels in Assam have been engaged during the 'Covid' period as a 'Covid Centre'. So students will not be able to come to higher educational institutions until the proper sanitization of the Covid Centres are done. UGC has given notification that the higher educational courses will start from November, although it is not yet certain whether it will be effective.

Problems in the health sector of Assam and its future:

The Government of India must bring about a revolutionary change in the development of infrastructure in the sector of health in Assam keeping post-Covid situation in mind. Covid-19 has taught the developing countries like India that the future of India is not secure only if it is too focused on military strength; we have other sectors also to be strengthened. Why is

the issue of human safety important? Health Right must be available to all classes of people in India in the same way.¹² Otherwise with India Assam will lose a lot of human resources in the coming days and the human health will get worse.

The current lockdown period has proved that the Government of Assam will not be able to deal easily with such a potential and novel viral disease if the health sector in Assam does not get change in the coming days. The government must also focus on maintaining suitable ICU facility of the government hospitals of the state of Assam.

Assam needs to focus more on the practical benefits of medicinal applications in the post-Covid-19 period. Assam is also very dependent on other countries for raw materials for medicines. For example India purchases a large part of the raw material for medicines from China. In the post-Covid India needs to strengthen its position within India to increase the export of medicines in the international market by softening the quantity of imports. (Note-India's pharmaceutical sector is related to grow to US\$55 billion by 2020. About 75% of the top 20 pharma companies are Indian owned. India has a total of 24,000 pharmaceutical companies, of which around 250 fall under the organised category. These 250 organised units control nearly 70 per cent of the market. Source-<https://www.quora.com/What-is-future-of-the-Indian-pharma-industry>)

There are many areas to be undertaken by the Government of India for public awareness by creating the mind of the people of Assam with scientific mentality. The initiative launched by the Prime Minister towards swachhata will also achieve a full scale. To expand the journey of clean-up at the rural level along with every government and private sector; that also requires the Government of India to take up in the plan.

Problems coming to the inter-state transport system in Assam:

Covid-19 will also bring about a major change in the transport system in the entire world. An environment that cannot be accessed by any person has been taught by Covid-19 to the whole world. Therefore, improving the traditional ways transport system is now the best one. The issue of social distancing will be of special importance in the coming days. It is certain that a person suffering from a disease has to be more careful in scanning if he or she is to be treated from one state to another for medical or other reasons. Government should pay strict attention while producing visas to individuals. States like Assam also need to focus on these issues. Looking at the transport system in Assam it is seen that the government and the private sector are often carrying excessive traffic. In this case the government needs to enact strict laws so that the disease cannot be passed from one person to other. System can be built; similarly, it is important for the Government of Assam to work on it. In the same way every passenger should be made to check health in the railway and do insurance while travelling. The sanitization of trains and aircraft should be established as legal issue. Similarly there is a need for state enough scanning machines that diagnosis can be done in a short time at railway stations and airports. On the other hand wearing mask at public place should be mandatory for all.

Future of the Sector of Tourism:

Covid-19 will also bring about a huge change in the field of tourism of Assam. The main areas of leisure and entertainment medium in Assam will also come up with a huge challenge. That is the film industry and mobile theaters will be hampered. Every nation or state can collect a huge amount of revenue by the sector. In the current situation, the social distance will be as important as social culture; in the coming days the number of tourists will definitely reduced. So the amount of revenue collected from this sector will also be reduced. As a result the states will face huge losses.

The tourism sector of Assam is being maintained at the centre of various historical monuments of the district Sibsagar, National parks, and wildlife sanctuaries of Assam including The Kaziranga National Park. During Covid-19 tourists will not visit them and state government will face lots of problems.

Problems and possibilities that may come into the world of nature:

India is fifth among the 30 most affected countries in the 21st century.¹³ According to the World Health Organization 3.2 million people die worldwide due to air pollution only. 3.8 million People die only due to smoke of cooking fuels.¹⁴

During the lockdown, the world as well as India had time to extract many of the atmosphere's most bad substances to create pure oxygen and regain the lost balance of nature. According to China's South China Morning Test, the lockdown in china also caused a decline of 100 million tonnes in two weeks.

The environment near the National Highway has also been able to grow due to low emission of waste products from vehicles and factories. Wildlife has got the opportunity to move without fear. In many places, the scenes of wildlife coming out have been noticed in the media. Now due to Covid-19 India is back in the past. Therefore, the government of Assam also gives special importance to the protection and rescue of freely moving wildlife to the right place with special emphasis on this aspect. On the other hand, the amount of pollution in the atmosphere will suddenly shift to the previous state. If there is a sudden imbalance, will the atmosphere become a new germ centre? In this case the health sector and scientists of the Government of Assam need to be aware.

One of the most important positive aspects of 'lockdown' is that covid-19 has created a new consciousness. Today the world is raising voice for the Amazon Rainforest. The awareness has risen by the people of Assam as well as India against the coal mining in Dehing-patkai rainforest in Assam. This is two special examples of indirect results of Covid-19. In the coming days, issues such as environmental awareness, life conservation, forestation, etc. will gain more importance and relevance worldwide.

Possible changes in the field of literature and media:

The change in the field of literature and newspapers in Assam after Covid-19 is certain to come. There has been a considerable change in the field of literature in India after the First World War or the Second World War. Similarly the explosion of Herosima-Nagasaki, Covid-19 is expected to bring out such a classic new thinking. Perhaps there will be a new theory of literature. Deep faith in God, genuine respect for religious places, etc. have been the agents of the writer's mind to bring new insights into the mind.

Print Media will also face challenges in the coming days. Many newspapers and magazines in Assam have been closed during the lockdown. Many journalists have been exempted from their jobs. The impact of this will be on the field of news and literature. It is certain that the process of closing newspapers may have any political potential as it is not a matter of any ruling government trying to subdue the phenomenal freedom of the media with a suppressing policy.

Covid-19 will be established strongly on the internet in the field of news, literature and culture in Assam. According to DE-CIX reports that in the first two weeks of lockdown an average of 30 to 40 percent of internet usage in the country comes to light.¹⁵ *The Economic Times* reported that gaming traffic has increased by 50% in the last few weeks. With loading of traffic in video moving and using the applications like Skype, Teams and Zoom, said Ivo Ivanov, CEO of DE-CIX International, which runs an internet exchange in Mumbai. The overall internet traffic in the first two weeks of the lockdown, which began on March 25, increased by 1 terabyte, said Ivanov, 30-40% higher than normal.¹⁶

In the field of literature and news presentation, online journals, the media like websites blogs etc. will gain special popularity and importance. The popularity of gaming will increase. On the other hand if the influence of online media increases more than ever, the amount of 'Fake News' will be doubled in India and this will result in the loss of public confidence on the news sector. As a result there will be a way for the government to intervene in the use of the Internet in the next few days. So covid-19 will be a popular issue for Assam in the next period. Covid-19 has also opened a way for research on the changes that may come.

The problems in the culture of Assam and its future:

The Covid-19 terrible brought challenges to the world's cultural sector. The cultural dimension of human society was further broken during this period due to human beings having to remain at home to prevent social infections. Cultural programs, Religious practices festivals etc. have all been postponed during this period. In the case of Assam it is seen that the major festival of Assam *Bohag Bihu* could not be observed. Similarly the *Eid* of the Muslim community could not be held this time in Assam as well as across India. *Durga Puja* cannot be held in India as well as in Assam. The Covid-19 brought an environment that could not be accessed.

Assamese mobile Theatre industry has been affected badly. Thousands of artists were involved in this field. They made a living by presenting plays. So these playwrights and the mobile artists had to face a loss for a year. The artists and singers of Assam have been in a

state of loss. The money received from these platforms was the main factor of their economic vein. Due to lockdown and social infection these forums could not be held in Assam this time. This will definitely impact the economy and cultural sector of Assam for a year.

Possibility of future study

Our study and research cannot be claimed to be updated one. It has limitations. This research is just the beginning of the proposed study. We expect researchers across India to come forward to study new directions and content in the matter proposed in the coming days.

[Details: Information about the source of research and analysis of data have been obtained till 9 pm on August 28, 2020]

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