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Keynote Address

During Inaugural Session of an International Webinar on “Covid -19 Third Wave : Threats, Prevention & Care”

On Sunday, the 8th August, 2021 at 17.00 Hours IST;

Organized by the

Indian Institute of Social Reforms and Research

by

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Honourable Chairperson Prof. Sudhakar Agarkar, Vice Chancellor prof Soma Bandyopadhyay and other distinguished organizers of Indian Institute of Social Reform and Research, my learned speakers and members of the audience

At the outset I express my heartfelt gratitude for inviting me to address keynote on Covid-19 3rd wave-- Threat, Prevention and Care.

In this 21st century we have witnessed most devastating Covid-19 pandemic worldwide for more than last 1 1/2 years. As per WHO's official record we have lost global people about 43 lacs with infected more than 20crores. Real picture is much more. Our country is one among the most affected countries in the world. It is a new form of coronavirus i.e., 'Novel Coronavirus' which we all know that it was first reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Name has been coined for having crown like spikes protein on the surface of the virus. This family of viruses can cause large spectrum of systemic illness from simple flu-like symptoms to fatal respiratory illness. Earlier years we have faced SARS(2003), MERS(2012) of this family but this novel coronavirus has unprecedented effect globally due to genetic mutations --alpha, beta, gamma, delta, delta + and lambda till date with the change of characters of the virus, power of infectivity and virulency. The genetic changes are one of the important factors of covid-19 waves and at the same time these cause post covid lung fibrosis, ilds, cardiac, neurological, renal and psychological involvement as a consequence.

So, COVID-19 not only affects human body but also affects human mind, social relations, family relations, economy, politics and so on. Even after one and half year's medical science is now searching the definite treatment particularly a specific antiviral agent and also a better vaccine with better efficacy.

We have experienced the effects of the first wave where death and disability are directly linked to COVID-19 mainly. It affected mainly the older people and the people having various comorbid conditions. During this period specially scientists and doctors all over the globe were very much

engrossed to illuminate the basic characters, pathophysiology, clinical manifestations as well as the treatment options. The first wave rose slowly and waned off slowly but existed for a longer duration. At the same time attack of Covid 19 exposed nakedly the weakness of the health system, its meagre infrastructure and human resource.

We faced second wave which strafe mainly the youths and relatively younger population. This wave has spread very rapidly and showed more devastations as there were large mobilization of citizens due to assembly elections in many states, Kumbh Mela and like other festivals. Many people also presented late to health care facilities for fear of covid-19 infection. Millions died due to shortage of government hospital beds, due to inability to bear the cost of treatment in private hospitals, due to unavailability of Oxygen, lifesaving medications like *tocili zumab*, steroids and ventilators with other life supports. Health set up practically was crashed badly. We have lost thousands of doctors, nurses and health workers during this pandemic. Innumerable non- covid patients were also neglected utterly in India. We have experienced shocking mass cremation, mass burial we never thought of before that the last journey could be happened with such disrespectful manner.

Regarding vaccination there are more and more unanswered questions. We know very well that India is one of the highest vaccine producer countries while till now 39 crore people with 1st dose and 11 crore people with 2nd doses are being vaccinated out of 139 crores population. This is due to lack of utter vaccination policy, lack of foresightedness of the Central Government. When we are discussing in this webinar, about 40000 people are newly infected daily and apprehending third wave. Cry of the people for Universal vaccination excluding children should be done free of cost during this interim period before third wave. 3rd wave is unavoidable, unpredictable because of lack of vaccination and paucity of health infrastructure in the country.

Observing all these phenomena the simple question that comes to mind were all of these inevitable? If China in particular and USA, Europe and other countries including ours could stop international flights and transport covid-19 disaster with loss of innumerable lives and its impact over the globe could not be checked? If all the concerned scientists, research institutes of the globe could unite under an autonomous International Coordinating Research Body, economically backed by the governments of all the countries to save the entire mankind, this horrible picture would be different?

The poor and developing countries are still deprived of vaccination, where ratio being 1 : 500; on the other side this ratio is 1 : 4 in rich countries.

In this present critical situation of COVID-19 pandemic it may be said that -

- No one is safe, until everyone is safe.
- Our painful and bitter experiences point us straight to take up this challenge that we have to apply the following weapons-
 - 1) Covid appropriate behaviour at all cost;
 - 2) Universal vaccination- earliest important;

- 3) Active surveillance by the respective Governments;
- 4) Peoples covid care network team to implement early detection, isolation, diagnosis and treatment mild to moderate under medical supervision;
- 5) to build up adequate health infrastructures, covid Hospital, ICU beds, oxygen plant, lifesaving medicines along with increase human resources -- doctors -nurses - paramedical staff and volunteers.

I am sure our learned speakers will enrich us in-depth to fight the challenges ahead.

Thank you all.