



BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS TO FRONTLINE WARRIORS IN INDIA DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The corona virus disease has spread rapidly throughout the world causing huge morbidity. The frontline warriors in combating this situation are health care providers, police personnel, sanitation workers and essential service providers. The Indians showed their gratitude towards them by ways like clapping or ringing bells in the balconies, showering flower petals, lighting up lamps, candles, diyas, etc. On one hand, when the nation is appraising the efforts of the corona warriors; some people are creating hurdles and misbehaving with them. Some doctors had even reported being evicted and attacked. In various regions, health workers and police officials came under heavy stone pelting by irate mob. The endless sacrifices of the corona warriors cannot be counted. But resistance from a section of the society only adds to their plight. Hence, security of the frontline warriors should be of utmost importance for the nation.

KEYWORDS : frontline warriors, corona, gratitude, resistance

INTRODUCTION

The corona virus disease (COVID-2019) is caused by a novel corona virus (2019-nCov). It originated from Wuhan, China in December 2019. It has spread rapidly in the whole world and is causing huge morbidity and mortality. Due to this, the Director General of World Health Organization (WHO) declared this outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020 [1]. The first case of the COVID-19 pandemic in India was reported on 30 January 2020 from Kerala[2]. This number rose to a total of 4,40,215 cases as on June 23, 2020 taking a toll of 14,011 lives. [3] The doubling time for COVID-19 cases in India was 5.8 days on March 18. It reduced to 2.9 days on March 22 when Janta curfew was implemented and gradually rose during various phases of lockdown to reach 14.6 days on May 31, the last day of lockdown phase 4. The doubling time is 18.1 days as on June 22, 2020.[4]

This trend indicates that the spread of the pandemic has gradually slowed down and the efforts of the frontline fighters battling this emergency situation have been successful to a considerable extent.

Gestures of appreciation: Since the beginning of this pandemic in India, the whole nation is battling with COVID-19 with fervour of determination and cooperation. The Government of India is taking measures like implementing Public curfew on March 22 followed by nationwide lockdown from March 25 till May 31st in 4 phases. The frontline warriors in combating this situation are health care providers, police personnel, media people, sanitation workers, bankers and other essential service providers. They are fully committed to their duties and leaving no stone unturned in containment of this disease. To pay respects to their huge service to the nation during such trying times, Prime Minister suggested that on March 22 at 5 PM, all citizens should acknowledge and salute their efforts by standing in the balconies and at the doors of their houses and clap or ring bells for five minutes as a gesture of appreciation . [5] From children to the elderly, common people to VIPs, all came out in balconies, lawns and terraces of their homes as the clock struck five to show gratitude to doctors, paramedics, police and other personnel associated with essential services when the country was observing an unprecedented 'Janta Curfew' on March 22, 2020 to check the spread of the virus. Police sirens were also heard at India Gate and in other parts of the national capital. [6]

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on April 3, addressing the

nation, said that the nation is united in the fight against coronavirus. To illustrate this, on April 5 at 9 PM., he asked that the citizens switch off all lights for nine minutes and light up lamps, candles, diyas, torch or mobile phone flashlights adding that this exercise will lift our morale and fill us with confidence to win this war against the pandemic. [7]

Much before the designated time of 9 PM, the country people switched off lights at their homes while lamps and candles lit up the streets as people stood in their balconies and at entrance doors in unison. [8] The view was like Diwali festival in April. The local artisans were also helped indirectly. Although, many people came up with theories that lighting natural lights at this time would allow cosmic waves to enter our bodies and create the antibodies for corona, yet they are not proved.

AIIMS doctors on May 2, showered flower petals on police officials, to show their gratitude towards Delhi Police for their work in enforcing lockdown guidelines in the national capital. The doctors were seen chanting 'Jai Hind' while showering petals on Delhi Police officials. As the threat of deadly coronavirus looms large, the police officials across the country are coming up with several awareness campaigns and unique attempts to create awareness among the public about the lockdown norms and restrictions. [9]

Indian Air Force (IAF) performed a nationwide activity on May 3 to express its gratitude towards all the corona heroes fighting in the frontline in this war against COVID-19. The IAF helicopters showered flowers at hospitals across 23 locations in the country to salute doctors and other medical staffs. Other activities included fly-pasts, lighting of warships and displays by army bands. The whole nation applauded the unconditional endless efforts of frontline fighters. [10]

Brickbats to corona warriors: On one hand, when the whole nation is appraising the efforts of the corona warriors and praying for them; on the other hand, some people are creating hurdles and misbehaving with them. As the global coronavirus pandemic worsened by the day, fear started rising in India and frontline medical workers started bearing the brunt of public wrath. There has been targeted harassment of doctors and other frontline workers. Medical staff in the national capital New Delhi were being ostracized and discriminated against by their communities due to the fear that they may be infected after working with coronavirus patients. Some doctors had even reported being evicted, or

facing threats that their essential services like water and electricity would be cut off. [11]

After a sharp spike was seen in the COVID-19 cases across India, a shocking incident of doctors in the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital in New Delhi has come to light. Doctors stated that the patients who were brought in from the Nizamuddin Markaz had been resisting treatment and maltreating the doctors and the medical staff in the hospital. They were intentionally spitting all over the ward. They were also urinating in the corridors rather than washrooms provided for this purpose. Through their actions, these patients could have possibly compromised the health of several health care providers. [12]

The brutality of the public was borne not only by the health team but also by the most trusted section of the society for providing safety and security- the Police. A policeman's hand was chopped off with a sword and six other officers were severely injured when they were attacked while enforcing coronavirus lockdown measures in northern Punjab state on April 12. The severed left hand of Harjit Singh, an assistant sub inspector for Punjab Police, was later reattached to his wrist following nearly eight hours of surgery. The police officer was given a red carpet welcome after getting discharged from the hospital. [13]

Another shameful incident happened in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh where a team of health workers and police officials came under heavy stone pelting by an irate mob on April 15, when they reached there to take away a COVID-19 suspect to quarantine facility. Two doctors and four cops suffered serious injuries in the attack. [14]

Several healthcare workers in India have been attacked while battling to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Even as per reports, spitting was done on the doctors and they were chased by the unruly mob. An aggressive mob threw stones at two female doctors wearing personal protective equipment in the central city of Indore. Reports of attacks on doctors and nurses have also come from the southern city of Hyderabad and the western city of Surat. Any such attack is not justified, especially against doctors during a national health emergency. Meanwhile, a hospital in the northern city of Ghaziabad also witnessed unruly scenes. The hospital put at least 21 people in quarantine after they attended a religious event linked to hundreds of positive cases across the country. In the same Ghaziabad hospital, some of the quarantined attendees allegedly used abusive and vulgar language against members of health team. Some were walking naked in the hospital ward and harassing women doctors and nurses. They kept asking for cigarettes and tobacco. [15]

CONCLUSION

The endless sacrifices of the corona warriors who are battling the war against COVID pandemic with bravery and determination cannot be counted. They have to face numerous challenges in the form of long duty hours, staying away from families and risking their own lives in order to protect the health of the nation. But sinful activities mentioned above and non-cooperation and resistance from a section of the society only add to their plight. Hence, strict action must be taken against those violating the norms, attacking the sovereignty of the corona heroes and those not allowing them to perform their duties. Security of the frontline warriors should be of utmost importance for the nation in this crisis situation. If only we acknowledge the efforts of the corona warriors and help them, can this nation stay safe, healthy and secure in future.

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