

'Pole Dance' by Corona Clan - Human Life sandwiched between 'Holocaust' & 'Holocough'!

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Hey up! We are now fully sucked into the gale-force of Second Wave! Yes, the pandemic has assumed mastodontic proportions with a Lucifer smile, in less than four weeks! But, is it not a misnomer to call it Second Wave when we did not succeed in completely bending the curve of the previous one? The cyclic scroungers, legged up by a gaggle of restrictive measures, had indeed ebbed to a large extent (below 10K daily caseload) a few weeks back but it had never crashed to a point of extinction! Elsewhere in the world such as America, Latin America and Europe, experts have been describing the recent tidal surge in infections as Third Wave and Fourth Wave but the bottomline is - the First Wave itself never significantly abated! The contagion followed a loop-model

- peaked and dipped, perhaps only to rest and gather more steam for another surge to a new crescendo!

Likewise, when genome-sequencing has irrefutably established that the mysterious virus has rapidly mutated and too many variants are now digging at the root of human life, should we still call it COVID-19? Perhaps not! Ideally, to make a clear-eyed distinction for the purpose of research, data-crunching, clinical treatment, vaccine development and also policy-making, the world needs to eke-name it as COVID-21!

Unlike the previous variants of COVID-19, the transmissibility of COVID-21 mutated variants is highly incendiary. So is their ability to torpedo human lives! That is how the global tally of daily caseload has been skyrocketing by more than six lakh and the ghost of death has been dancing around the five-digit of 10,000, daily! No different is the ghastly scenario in India. It has alarmingly spiralled beyond 700 deaths daily! Ouch! A little more than half in Maharashtra alone! Why?

Like many other continents, the virulent British and South African variants have unnervingly spread in many pockets of India **a la** the recent sero survey in Punjab. ***SacrÃ© bleu!***

The actual damage stems from what the Ministry of Health has described as 'double-mutant' variant! It is indeed our own indigenous contribution to the variant-affluent coronavirus clan! Even as experts brace up to fathom the actual nature of the pathogen, it has been inferred that it confers immune-escape ability punctuated with torrid infectivity! Haplessly looking at the upwardly shooting Eucalyptus-like graph of daily caseload, India is, beyond the pale of doubt, in for a much protracted battle tilted in favour of the corona family! The on-going poll fever would certainly cushion febrile 'pole dance' by the virus in the coming weeks!

Though analogists may find that the contagion is killing less people in India than America, EU and Latin America but it is largely because it has relatively youthful population and it is indeed difficult for the pathogen to hitch a frequent ride! Secondly, previous exposure to the pathogen may also have a role!

Let's now fly across continents from South Asia to Latin America! Going by the number of cases in Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Colombia and Chile, it may be unalterably concluded that the era of darkness reigns supreme in the Amazonian part of the globe! Brazil tops the table of death counts and would, at the present pace, surpass the American tally much sooner! Its rickety healthcare infrastructure has almost caved in! Its morgues and crematoriums have run out of shelf space! The entire nation is in the bone-crushing grip of the twin expressions of 'holocaust' and 'holocough'!

The society at large appears to be paying colossal price for having a highly-pilloried President who has consistently been dismissive of the virus and has an unmeme-able propensity to demonstrate comical traits! Chile has incidentally turned out to be a superspreader even after vaccinating one-third of its 18 million population. Highly transmissible variants of UK and Brazil have taken firm roots here. The grim scenario is no different in other Latin American countries.

What about North America? The rising tableau of pain is a sock to the gut of even the strongest homo sapien! The pandemic continues to scorch the earth in the US. During a virtual White House health briefing recently, the Director of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, admitted her ***'recurring feeling of impending doom'***

! Notwithstanding the highest number of jabbing, infections have again begun to zoom up. But, more than the pandemic, what appears to have killed Americans in almost equal proportions to the COVID-19 in 2020, are the weirdly strange side-effects of coronavirus!

They are road accidents and opioid abuse!

Though the pandemic meant lesser traffic on the road but it also amounted to a rare chance to drive recklessly! Deaths per mile driven

leapfrogged by 24% - biggest spike since 1924! Similarly, death from overdoses of opioid cliffed to a new high during the pandemic. As normal life came to a standstill, deaths from synthetic opioids rose by 52% in 2020!

The prevailing global scenario is that infections have rapidly outpaced injections, voila! Though there is no imminent end to the corona-sponsored animus towards humanity, vaccination appears to be the only bankable 'carbon sink' for the soaring transmission of infections! And India is not far behind - close to 90 million jabs administered thus far. All the countries such as UK, Israel, the US and some tiny entities which have rushed their vaccination drives, appear to be finding some degree of solace from the present raging infections. The contagion appears to be troubling less if a country has jabbed a good swathe of population. For instance, entire EU is caught in utter befuddlement on the issue of vaccination! Going by the tremors of fear running through a large part of EU and its messy vaccination strategy, it could not save itself from grim blushes! Fractured vaccination strategy lagging behind the new surge across the continent has freighted it back to the initial days of the pandemic where deaths had become more routine than the treatment. The AstraZeneca vaccine which was initially decided, not to be jabbed to senior citizens, is now being administered to only elderly as younger people have reported blood-clotting. Though the European Medicines Agency does admit that its benefits outweigh the risks or side effects but a long term damage is already done!

Anti-vaxxers across the bloc have done the damage - much higher degree of hesitancy has been reported in Germany and France.

Even as vaccination has emerged as the most effective race against the virus but just too many nations, rich as well as poor, appear to be losing it for multiple reasons. Some for lack of access! Many despite plenty of access! Oof! When would this pandemic end? Medical historians have not much clues to tell us anything definitive. Even today, there is no consensus when the 1918 pandemic ended and how? Different schools suggest that the world population acquired herd immunity over the years; others say that the mutated virus gradually became defanged! Many say that pandemics fade away rather than burn out!

If we rely on data of smallpox, one of many scary pandemics which was actually beaten back by human efforts, it may take years. It had actually consumed 13-long-years of global vaccination campaigns to defeat smallpox. If this is what the history has to offer us, let's all pray and religiously practise '**Do Gaj Doori**' *mantra* if the 'vermin' is to be completely 'unmasked'!