

## Pandemic turns into 'Kalashnikov' - A Pogrom against the Poor!

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**THE** pandemic, in its latest *avataar*, has turned into *aatish (fire)*

- a dastardly 'Multi-barrelled Kalashnikov'! Eight consecutive weeks of soaring cases (now peaking to over **eight lakhs** a day), and five weeks of rising deaths (over **13000** per day)! Oof, it is simply a pogrom against the poor, irrespective of the race! Statistically speaking, the Blacks and the Latinos have died in greater number than the Whites in the US. The higher percentage of death has less to do with the race and more with their economic conditions! In Asia, people living in slums and unplanned urban enclaves with poor civic facilities have disparagingly suffered more! Almost-similar is the case in the European bloc. With the virus, hitching a feudal ride on freshly-mutated variants, literally going ballistic in many pockets of the globe, the ruling political elites find themselves parked in a state of utter chaos and befuddlement! With deaths in hundreds, many have willy-nilly gone for another round of lockdown - once again decidedly upending the recovery process of the economy-in-tatters!

Interestingly, lockdown which was widely resorted to by all nations during the first phase of the pandemic, has rapidly graduated into a costly tool which only an affluent country can afford today!

For instance, many rich EU countries such as Germany, France and Italy have gone for 'shut down' option after they failed to effectively deal with the fault lines exposed by the fresh tidal wave of infections. Britain did the same but with a shrewd tact of deeply-meditated strategy - vaccinate as many as its National Health Service personnel could jab.

And the dividend is on record for peer-reviews. A study released by Public Health England claims that vaccine roll-out at a rapid pace prevented over 10,000 deaths of people above 60 by March-end. The Report underlines that over 15 million doses were given to persons aged 60 and above by the end of March, and it **prevented 10400 deaths**, largely among those aged above 80.

**Also See** - [Vaccination before New Variants turn radioactive! - India does well - EU turns dawdler!](#)

Going by the nuggets of experience and wisdom gathered by public health administrations worldwide, the twin strategies which may, with a reasonable degree of efficacy, militate against the tornado of fresh transmissions are - temporary shutdown and vaccination at a pugnacious scale!

The UK did it and the Boris Johnson Govt has circumspectly reopened the economy again. The EU countries could barely hang on to just one of the two imperatives - the lockdown - and the ruling elites are heading for raucous political donnybrooks! Their political capital has suffered serious blows and they now face gnarly poll prospects where elections are due in the coming months - Germany and France. Vaccination drive in EU continues to progress at a lethargic pace for a raft of reasons, including messy procurement and oops-tinged mongering about some of the vaccines!

What about the poor and developing countries? Having seen the harrowingly damaging implications for their economies in 2020, lockdown as a choice is clearly a rudely ruled out option! They cannot afford to pauperise their citizens nor their own treasuries. Many continue to reel under the fusilladed fiscal health stemming from the first phase of lockdown!

The scenario in India is no different. With the Centre leaving the Corona turf to be managed by the fiscally-ailing State Governments, they are unhesitatingly loath to go for complete lockdown. So, there is clearly an urgent political need to create a facade of restrictions as the citizens find themselves caught in pincer-like grip of skyrocketing infections. India is leading the global count with 1.99 lakh cases with over a thousand deaths. Hundreds of people are getting infected every minute. Hospitals and ICUs, including private ones, have been spilling over with the infected and hand-holding is evidently conspicuous by absence! Many States have honed the art of merely making their tongues wag!

**Also See** - ['Pole Dance' by Corona Clan - Human Life sandwiched between 'Holocaust' & 'Holocough'!](#)

Vaccine is, undoubtedly, an effective speed-breaker for the rapid infectivity but certainly not when the transmission is racing at a breakneck pace! Irrespective of harmful implications on the economy and the tax revenue, lockdown for a couple of weeks is the only instrument available

to break the chain! Or, inevitable consequence would be to pay the price in terms of hundreds of precious lives. By launching '**Tika Utsav**' to speed up vaccination is a welcome piece of history (two cheers for India) but it must be noted that vaccine takes time to work whereas the nerve-wracking crisis is to contain the transmission. The scariest aspect of rapid transmission of infection is that it necessarily results in 'lab space' for the virus to mutate and come up with new variants. For instance, one Study finds that Brazil's P1 variant is rapidly mutating and may soon become more life-gobbling! Another recent study conducted in Israel reveals that Pfizer vaccine was less effective against the South African variant which was found to be **mayassar** (present) even among the people who had been **jabbed twice!**

Secondly, going by the number of new variants and double-mutants being detected and studied by researchers, most vaccines are likely to be effective for a brief period of six to eight months, only! Apparently, it is a race between science and the virus where the latter has an upper hand!

Given the prickly scenario, it is just going to be too expensive and undoable for poor and developing economies to offer free vaccine doses for several years. A day is not too far when the governments will have to unapologetically allow retail sale once enough production capacity is ramped up. Most vaccine manufacturers have been pumping in eye-watering amount of investments to enhance capacity but it would take years. What may alleviate the piquant situation is the **waiver of Intellectual Property rights** by the countries where vaccines have been developed such as the US, UK, India, Russia and Germany. As per the WHO, close to 800 million does have been administered across the world. A major swathe of the globe is still **mahroom** (unvaccinated) and the COVAX is committed to corner a major part of future production for the poor nations.

What appears to be hurting the COVAX's efforts is the propensity of the rich countries to gazump a large amount of future production at higher prices. Some of them, including the USA, would soon have a surplus stock and it is going to pose a pretty 'embarrassing' challenge to the Biden diplomacy to win back its allies and large-scale goodwill among the developing nations. **Justajoo** (longing) for vaccine is equally potent among the rich allies of the US as well as poor African nations! The second aspect which is hurting the greater cause is the unpredictable side-effect like blood-clotting. After AstraZeneca, J&J vaccine has suffered a serious reversal of its good fate when the US paused its distribution on receiving complaints of serious blood-clotting in brain. Clearly, the benefits outweigh the side-effects but stern actions by governments have tilted the balance in favour of hesitancy lobbies which resort to mendacious agitprop to shame some of the vaccines! What is shockingly surprising is the latest statement of the China's Centre for Disease Control which expressed concern over the efficacy of the Sinovac vaccine!

Ouch! Such a statement was destined to be censored with deafening howls and the Xi leadership did not disappoint the world!

Another pernicious side-effect of the vaccine is found to be gender-discriminatory! Research has indicated that vaccines have impacted women more adversely than men. The CDCP of the US has found that women vaccinated the first dose reported higher side effects such as fatigue and dizziness.

However, no study has been done on the effects of vaccines on menstrual cycles. However, if one goes by comments on the social media, vaccines do upset the cycles and causes irregular periods and heavier menstruation!

**Also See - [Pandemic again tightening ironclad embrace - Revenue back to dancing on greasy pole!](#)**

Oops! Sorry, every side-effect of the COVID-19 is not detrimental! One of the key beneficiaries of the pandemic is the cosmetic surgery industry which appears to be relishing a Zoom-driven growth. With Zoom conferencing dominating the office life of most professionals during the pandemic, a good number of men and women have been opting for facelift and slimming procedure. The pandemic has robustly legged up 10% growth to the cosmetic surgery industry in the US; close to 20% in France and about 14% in Hong Kong. **India is no exception** ! Normally, Christmas used to be the ritualistic season for men and women to go for noses, eyelids, 'love handles' liposuction and skin rejuvenations but it has become a continuous process during the pandemic. Unlike in the past, men now account for 4 in 10 who are spending handsomely to turn more handsome and glamorously virile!

The parable of vaccination would be incomplete if I fail to talk about our tiny but 'happiest' neighbour Bhutan **a la** its metric of gross happiness index for its GDP! It was the first country among the 80 so far which have generously been gifted vaccines by India. The Prime Minister gifted vaccines in January but Bhutan consulted Buddhist monks and waited for two months to find an auspicious date to vaccinate its eight lakh citizens. And it has recently jabbed 85% of its population in seven days!

What does it mean? An unmistakable transmission of signal for India is not to delay the 'second dose' of gift as one month gap would soon be over! Though the Bhutanese signals are well decoded by New Delhi but going by the kerfuffle over the dearth of vaccines in most States where the pandemic is performing scary pole dance, it is likely to be a bit delayed gift for Bhutan despite vaccine diplomacy being a top priority of the Modi Government!

**Also See - [COVID-19 - Anti-vaxxers having 'quarantini' time at cost of Public Health!](#)**