



# As Humanity copes through a Pandemic

Venkat Pulla, September, 2020 Special Edition of IJICC, UK

The media began addressing the COVID 19, in January 2020. A report was circulated of a new respiratory virus spreading in Wuhan, China. By the 1st February, 14.3K cases were said to be counted in major cities in China, including Beijing and Shanghai. The virus travelled from China all over the world. The world began to unfold a new pandemic as countries in Europe, North America and Africa declared their first cases. The World Health Organisation declared a global health emergency on 30th January, and on 11th March, the WHO elevated the emergency to a pandemic. In March, 2020 It was estimated that 20% of the global population was living with restricted movement. Fast forward to nine months to September 7th as I write this editorial comment, 27,296,303 people have been affected and 887,599 deaths have taken place (Worldometer, 2020). Hundreds and thousands died in European nations and continue to die in USA and UK, India and Brazil. Several thousands died before the world took this seriously.

We had a galore of Prime Ministers and Presidents who were overconfident, frivolous and blatantly ignorant of the pandemic's overthrow of regimes, economy and showing their blissful ignorance as a cause of soundless death. The Morrison government's contradictory messages have confused many, in Australia while the Ardern government in New Zealand was described as being clear and unequivocal.

'People value transparency, and most will forgive missteps in such a fast-moving and unprecedented crisis, but the contradictory messages in the early days of the coronavirus did confuse. (Morrison's statement on 13 March that he would still go to a rugby league game after announcing that all gatherings of more than 500 should be cancelled after the weekend, was the most obvious, although he subsequently decided not to go.)' (The Guardian, 2020)

The giant power horse in the whole world, USA had Mr Donald Trump suggesting that his 'country wasn't built to shut down' and he recklessly suggested that "If it were up to the doctors, they'd say let's shut down the entire world. This could create a much bigger problem than the problem that you started out with" (The New York Times, 2020). And this he said at a time when 158 Million Americans were told to stay home. The Americans, a few millions of them that value their freedoms more than others accuse mask wearing for prevention as part of a conspiracy and seem silent when they see the mass graves being dug for the dead. I read a



commentator writing in the Philadelphia Inquirer that America is drunk on a warped idea of freedom, that is killing its people (Bunch, 2020).

Boris Johnson, the UK Prime Minister was described as nonchalant and his government 'too slow to act' and his Ministers failing to lead by example until he had 'a tough old moment, and the medical staff were considering how to announce his death. (The Guardian, 2020, Blackmore, 2020). Can a close brush with death really change any one? Dr Susan Blackmore says that most near-death research, focusses on 'near-death experience' (NDE), of jets of lights, out-of-body experiences, and very occasionally brings out a life review of the person as though their whole life is flashing before their eyes.

'People who survive such experiences often report profound changes in their personality, preferences and – above all – their motivations' (Blackmore, 2020).

For a while many of these leaders didn't see a new order that was being ushered into the world i.e. to live one needs to give up one's freedom and stay indoors. Social and physical distancing measures have become the new world social order.

Within Australia, In the state of Victoria, we will continue hard-line curfews for a few more weeks, with costs hooping over 9 Billion. Dollars. (ABC News 2020). The limited joy in Queensland brought about by its reasoned measures are constantly challenged by its border closure measures and the latest being a nursing staff affected in a hospital (ABC News 2020).

Lockdowns were sudden in some countries and many unintended consequences continue to prevail. People that refuse any lockdown orders are beaten with sticks in India. A shoot at sight order prevailed in Philippines. Those affected and mortified, taking refuge in the sanctity of the temples and mosques were dragged by their hide to receive medical attention in some Asian countries.

Many things have happened as a result of Lockdowns to prevent the spread of Corona virus. Life has become messy and the pandemic certainly continues to have far reaching costs more than what we are now paying upfront. It has cut across all classes of humanity the rich, the middle and the poor in every nation although I suspect the poor and the disadvantaged pay a heavier price in many ways. Many world leaders that seem to be in positions of power in democratic countries even today appear to wade through denial, show limited regard to scientific advice and suffer from an obsession to put economy before lives. The elderly and the frail aged populations do not count much. The rant that comes from progressive eugenics invades the territory of political economic decisions and unfortunately is eroding the quality of life for the elderly in our nursing homes.



Amidst the anxiety, sadness, and uncertainty about the future of humanity, the fear of death seems to be ironically taming the defiant amongst us. Dissent that goes with freedom has been cast away only to be replaced by discipline. Even our political leaders seem to have got some lessons out of the pandemic.

Now, almost eight months into a virus engulfing the whole world into a pandemic Governments, politicians and policymakers and those with expertise in health seem to stay and struggle with the ever-growing surges of containing the virus. Eradication seems an illusion.

Many countries and the richest amongst them continue their stubborn outlook to keep open all activities that gather people and reduce distance in the name of economic productivity. Trust, faith and sheer common sense or lack of it on the one hand and average citizen's own coping and resilience on the other seems to be affecting the recovery at the ground level. Surely it is apparent that we don't have a solution and the vaccines are far away. The next two final question are: Is it possible to make progress against the pandemic? and are we making progress? The answer seems that some countries seem to have failed in their response to the pandemic, others met the challenge much more successfully. Perhaps the most important thing to know about the pandemic is that it is possible to fight the pandemic. In the scientific opinion of the experts 'Countries that have responded most successfully were able to avoid choosing between the two: they avoided the trade-off between a high mortality and a high socio-economic impact of the pandemic (Our World in Data, 2020).

### **Special Edition Background**

Covid, 19, has now become an inextricable part of our lives. Amidst lockdowns and country wide curfews in some parts of the world, life still goes on and indeed must go on. As an editorial board member, I have proposed that The IJICC have a special issue to be co-operatively developed and produced with a current working title: Covid19 Life Beyond, which will be thoroughly edited. Dr Tina Doe agreed our Editor in Chief supported the idea and agreed to take it to the Board and came back very quickly with a positive approval. As a social work academic and as a member of the Asian and Pacific Association for Social Work Education, [APASWE](http://www.apaswe.org) I was confident that I will be able to attract articles for the special issue. I began reaching a number of social sciences, humanities, arts and social work lists that I am familiar with. I sought out researched and reflective writing that showcased academic rigour while remaining personal and narratological where possible. This really grounded observations in the traditions of qualitative research. In the beginning I presented a set of my humble ideas and offered initial contours to shape them. I am grateful many authors took to them Human resilience defies the elasticity of the rubber band that holds the mask that we are asked to wear in today's world. As a construct it is difficult to measure, yet you can see through these articles, how many of them address the themes of coping, resilience and hope (Pulla,



2013). Abstracts of 300 to 350 words were submitted in advance and approved to proceed for writing the full-length article. The potential authors were also asked to submit 5 key words and a short biographical introduction of themselves within 75 words. While I have utilised a number of authors that wrote articles also as peer referees the entire process has been completely blind and I went to the extent of even dropping one or two self-citations of the authors before sending them for reviews.

The authors featured in this special edition are from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan Rwanda, South Africa, and United Kingdom.

The themes touched are primarily impacts of Covid 19 lockdown on families, economy, tourism and interstate labour, refugee camps, marginalised groups such as HIV communities, people with disabilities, children, role of cultures in coping and building resilience and on the role of governments and impacts on the scarce resources and government and careless citizenship. Papers were also accepted in the areas of education, pandemic induced teaching and learning experiences. The pandemic has had multifarious impacts and the articles included in this volume capture some of those threads.

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University, Bali, Indonesia. Additionally, I am grateful to a number of other referees who decided to be anonymous, herein Australia and also overseas.

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