



THE SPECTRE OF THE
PANDEMIC

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ESSAYS

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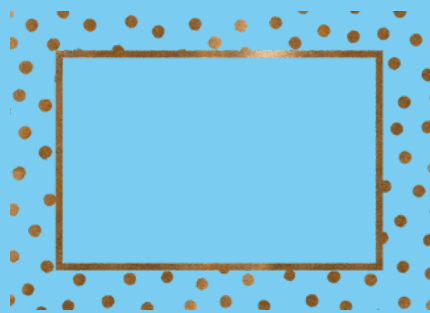


STORIES THAT INSPIRE

Stories that raise hope amidst the chaos

FRAMING THE INFECTION

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DEPARTMENT AT A GLANCE

the year gone by



Kaveri



Nupur



Aamiya

*From the Editors'
Desk*



From the Editors' Desk

Chaos had already erupted in the neighboring China and a few other countries with the outbreak of COVID-19 by the end of year 2019. However, at that time, India was largely untouched by the danger that was looming large over not just over itself but also the entire world. In January, there were only three cases in India, confined to the southern state of Kerala, and no identified case in the month of February. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the WHO in March 2020, but India still stood safe from the outbreak of the pandemic.

However soon, country went into lockdown in the latter half of March to curb the spread of the virus. The lockdown brought lives to a standstill for numerous people and turned the world upside down for the significant others.

As life was locked down, we entered into the phase of the 'new normal', which made masks, soaps, sanitisers and social distancing the most important skincare and healthcare regimens. The lockdown saw many upheavals in the form of migrant labour, the failing healthcare system and the commercialisation of life saving mechanisms in the trying and testing times of the pandemic.

Not only this, the world literally became a slave to computers as most of the work started happening from behind the screens of computers and mobile phones, be it studies or business conferences. The education system in the country became totally dependent on online mode of learning as the physical classes became an impossibility in the near future. Not only colleges but also schools resorted to online teaching and learning methods, and suddenly the student-teacher interaction, and classroom atmosphere took the guise of zoom classes and WhatsApp class groups.

Despite the negativity and the invisible danger of the virus, there were certain positive things that happened too. According to a lot of people, especially belonging to the old age groups,

the lockdown also came as a boon as they could now enjoy the presence and company of their family members, who were always either too busy or too tired to spend time with the family.

There were a lot of crazy trends that were followed in the beginning of the lockdown too like the dolgano coffee trend and suddenly there was an awareness among the individuals to give paramount importance to their health and follow a healthy lifestyle inclusive of regular workout and a healthy diet. A lot of people found it difficult to adjust with no junk food availability in the beginning and it became like a competition in almost every household to try new recipes at home as a replacement to the new lack of junk food and street food.

Difficult as it gets, people are still adjusting to the concept of the 'new normal'. It did not just bring healthcare danger to our doorstep but has also affected a lot of industries, in which the worst affected industry could be tourism. The lockdowns and travel restrictions are necessary to check the virus. However, it has affected the domestic small-scale tourism badly. The people whose livelihood is dependent on this sector have come to their knees because of the spread of the virus.

The pandemic has brought us face to face with some of the harsh realities of our country, like the lack of proper healthcare facilities and shortage of doctors and other medical professionals in our country, the lack of resources and the skillful administration of a sudden and drastic situation. Nevertheless, we will keep moving forward armed with positivity and maintaining a social distance of at least two feet while doing so.

Essays



CRISES MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY FROM THE PANDEMIC

The 'pandemic preparedness' has always been recognised as an integral part of disaster preparedness systems at the national and international levels, it took the world a few weeks to fully comprehend the dimensions of what was unfolding. With a lot of uncertainty about the nature of COVID-19 – its transmission, its incubation period, and its possible treatment – the medical emergency management systems of even the most advanced countries struggled to handle the problem.

Taiwan warned the World Health Organisation (WHO) about COVID-19 and its Chinese origins on 31 December 2019. On 5 January, the WHO ignored this advice and issued a statement that advised countries against applying restrictions on travel or trade with China. The WHO emergency committee declared the outbreak as public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020. The WHO flagged that the window of opportunity to contain the virus was narrowing on 21 February 2020 and finally declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. India reported its first case of the virus on 30 January—the same day that the WHO declared COVID a public health emergency, but not a pandemic.

Prior to that, India had begun screening international arrivals from China and Hong Kong as early as January 18 in the three major airports of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata, four more airports from January 21 and 13 and more airports by January 28. A phone app -Aarogya Setu was developed and is being used to trace contacts. On 24 March, PM Narendra Modi announced a 21-day nationwide lockdown which unexpectedly resulted in a mass movement by migrants back to their home states.

The government announced a '1.7-trillion plan' for the poor and migrant workers. On 27 March, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a moratorium on loan repayment. All banks and housing finance companies were

permitted to allow a moratorium of three months on repayments of term loans outstanding on 1 March 2020. On 20 April, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal emerged as other coronavirus hotspots. The total number of COVID-19 cases reached more than 17000 nationally. The lockdown gave the country's health system time to strengthen its response. In particular, the time made available by the lockdown was used to increase India's production of key medical supplies, including testing kits, PPEs, ventilators and the like.

Before the pandemic India was an insignificant producer of PPEs, testing equipment and other material critical to the combat against the corona virus. India did not produce a single personal protective equipment (PPE) in April 2020, but by June, it was producing more than 200,000 PPEs a month. India established itself as a reliable supplier of pharmaceuticals by exporting hydroxychloroquine at the height of the pandemic when this drug was requested by several countries as a possible antidote to the corona virus.

The government also initiated the Shramik Special train services to ferry stranded migrant workers back to their native states amid the COVID-19 lockdown. On 4 May, India entered the third phase of its national lockdown. Soon the government initiated the Vande Bharat Mission to bring stranded Indians from various countries like UK, UAE, US, Maldives, Bahrain and Singapore. The Finance Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman announced a set of measures that are part of the '20- trillion fiscal and monetary package' announced by PM to support the Indian economy. This included relief to small businesses, taxpayers, power distribution companies, real estate, organised sector employees and contractors working with the government followed by stimulus measures to dairy, fisheries, food processing and animal husbandry sectors. India's Finance Minister extended the stimulus measures to bring structural reforms in coal, minerals, defence production, aviation, power discoms in UTs, space and atomic energy sectors.

In June, the Indian Railways started running 200 special train to repatriate migrant workers back to their home states. India began phased reopening after 75 days in lockdown and registered around 10,000 new coronavirus cases in a single day. On 11 June, India surpassed UK to become the fourth worst hit nation with a total of 2.9L cases.

CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

Over the last few months, the capacity for treating suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases in India has expanded to include a total of 2033 dedicated COVID facilities with over 19,000 isolation beds, over 24,000 ICU beds, and over 12,000 ventilators. Seven months after the appearance of the virus, India opened the largest COVID facility in the country, “The Sardar Patel COVID Care centre”, with a bed capacity of 10,000 located in New Delhi. Many health experts across the nation have claimed that the national lockdown and early interventions promoting dissemination of information and social distancing slowed the doubling rate and delayed the peak of the virus.

It is also possible that the relatively low number of cases in India is partially due to the number of tests being conducted, which was significantly lower when compared to other countries like the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and the United States. India has been recording a steady decline in the number of daily new deaths since October 1, 2020, while the national recovery rate is amongst the highest in the world. India has formally approved the emergency use of two vaccines against the coronavirus disease as it has already begun the process for one of the world’s biggest drives and aims to inoculate some 300 million people on a priority list this year.

Drugs Controller General of India VG Somani gave the green light for the emergency-use of two coronavirus vaccines, one developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University and the other by Indian company Bharat Biotech. Serum Institute of India (SII) is producing the vaccine Covishield developed

by Oxford University and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca. Covid has given India a diplomatic opportunity to pursue its aspirations of becoming a global power. Its pharmaceutical industry, especially the Serum Institute of India, had already made the South Asian nation the main supplier of essential medicines to the developing world. India has proactively sent vaccine supplies, as grant, to its neighbours and friends. Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan have already received the vaccine dose. There are also commercial supplies that have made available to Brazil and Morocco – even as other countries have reached out for assistance.

India's Vaccine Maitri, as the initiative has come to be known, is one of the most humane and diplomatic moves by the government on the foreign policy front in recent times. Serious efforts have been made to stabilise the economy and meet the public health challenge. People's continued participation in the process of healing from the both the economic and the health crises is central. At the same time, the pandemic represents an opportunity to carry out reforms that would not have been possible under more ordinary circumstances.

Aamiya Dhand 3rd Yr

Changing Trends within the Education Sector: Exploring Themes of Crisis and Adaptability

The COVID crisis has shown that hoping for the best does not help. We must plan for the worst and hope for the best. Education is in crisis at the moment. Our answer to the crisis in education during the pandemic has been to offer online education through digital platforms. However, there are serious issues related to access, availability of devices, content curation, teachers training, testing, exams, grades, funding, facilities, salaries, parents and fees. The worst affected, as always, will be the marginalized, rural and poor populations.

Equality of opportunity to all is one of the basic principles of our Constitution, and its significance to make education an achievable goal for all, cannot be emphasized enough. John Dewey, American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer, strongly argued that “[A]n environment in which some are limited will always in reaction create conditions that prevent the full development even of those who fancy they enjoy complete freedom for unhindered growth.” Another point he strongly supports is that for good education, one must lead the child’s current interests and abilities organically to logically organized human knowledge. This second point is a reference to the quality of education. Education is empowering and redefining. For hundreds of millions of the young in India, education is also about discipline, development, curiosity, creativity and a path to breaking the cycle of ignorance and poverty leading to employment and prosperity. According to Vivekananda, “What is education? It is book-learning? No Is it diverse knowledge? Not even that. The training by which the current and the expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education”

Ever since the widespread of corona virus knocked India in March 2020, Prime Minister of India issued immediate orders to shut schools and colleges in order to protect the students from the deadly disease. Since education of students could not be kept shut for a very long duration, the only crisis-driven solution appeared to be the shift to online mode of teaching-learning. Classes and examination shifted to online mode. Since its very inception, there has emerged a raging debate concerning the merits and demerits of digitalized education. While on one hand, there is an opinion which extends its gratitude to the fact that despite the global lockdown, the processes of education continue with the aid of technology, and even sees this opportunity- even though a forced one- for the much-needed upgradation of the quality of education through digitalization and e-learning, on the other, there is another dominant voice which cries foul over the severe condition of digital-divide that exists in many countries, especially the developing ones. The latter fear that model of e-learning may not be a realizable goal for poorer societies, making education even more a matter of privilege than before.

Pointing to the expected benefits of a transformed mode of teaching-learning, a research titled 'Impact of Pandemic Covid- 19 On Education in India' says that the pandemic has forced social distancing upon the humanity and has created insurmountable hurdles in the path of education systems all across the world. But on a positive note, the author adds that the current health crisis has provided an unexpected opportunity to the education system in India to pay immediate heed to the much-needed demand for infrastructural upgradation. In the words of the author, "...educational institutions of India have accepted the challenges and trying their best to provide seamless support services to the students during the pandemic." Indian education system got the opportunity for transformation from the traditional system to a new era. Though it has created many challenges, various opportunities are also evolved such as rise in use of Learning Management Systems, enhance

the use of a soft copy of learning material, improvement in collaborative work, rise in online meetings, enhanced Digital Literacy, improved use of electronic media for sharing information, worldwide exposure, better time management, demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

A report published by the ASSOCHAM' titled as "Digitalization of Education: A Readiness Survey Good Start, But Miles to Go" analyses the requirement for India to readily adapt and develop resilience towards transforming the challenges into opportunities. In their report, the basic challenges in front of India's new mode of learning have been framed: Inequalities in accessing online resources, depending upon one's socio-economic location in society, non-uniformity in hours of teaching and learning across online platforms, lack of supporting systems for effective and interactive dissemination of knowledge, impacts on the students' moral, intellectual and cognitive behaviour- these were only some challenges that were visible in the online model of teaching and learning.

The report made a revelation about the factor of learning experience amongst the surveyed students. It was found that around 30 per cent of the students agreed that it is difficult to study without classroom environment. While 80 percent of the teachers from private institutions are comfortable in conducting online classes, only 68% of the government institutions have supportive systems for the same. It shows lack of structural training in educational institutions to use online tools and conduct classes.

The article "Challenges for Quality Education in The Times of Pandemic"¹² by author Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury pointed out impediments in achieving sustenance in the online learning and what needs to be done is to overcome such challenges. In many cases it has been found that there is only one 4G smartphone available at home for many families, which would have to be shared by the earning members (as due to the norm of work from home) with

their siblings as well, which led to struggling to continue studies in the context of shrinking livelihood opportunities as wages cut and job losses were common during lockdowns. The article states that there would be high dropout rates from schools and colleges across the country in 2020-2021 and a few years subsequently. Covid 19 is acting as a double discrimination for women. In a patriarchal structure, where boys were given more priority than the girl, the number of female students dropping out of schools under pressures of new mode of education, would be more in comparison to boys.

There is no denying that COVID-19 has turned the world upside down. As the world searches for new strategies to cope with this pandemic and its aftermath, higher educational institutions are now looking at online teaching-learning as a window of hope. Since a very long time, it has been claimed that as a considerable addition to classroom learning, engaging in different online learning modalities can introduce students to new opportunities to access knowledge, while at the same time, break the mould of traditional classroom setting.

Kaveri 3rd Yr

A pandemic within the pandemic, the Alarming Rise of Domestic Violence during Covid-19

With a rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 cases across the world in the past few months, several international organisations took cognisance of a global rise in Domestic Violence (DV) cases as a result of physical distancing regulations and its subsequent lockdowns. Many countries reported a 15-30% hike in the number of distress calls received from women who were confined in closed spaces with abusive partners.

Unfortunately, domestic violence cases are underreported across the world, especially in times of global emergencies like COVID-19.

Women worldwide consider informal channels as their first point-of-reporting in the case of domestic violence. The first respondent is often the family and the police the last.¹ In India, the National Family Health Survey-4, conducted in 2015-16, revealed that 33% of married women in the age group of 15-49 experienced physical, sexual, or emotional spousal violence. Of these women, only 14% sought help and 77% never spoke about it. Among those who sought help, 65% reported to the natal family and only 3% reported to the police.³

The 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns

The grasp of domestic violence perpetrators has tightened in times of the pandemic in India. Abuse victims are distanced from their regular support systems making it difficult for them to call out for help. On 24 March 2020, the Prime Minister of India announced a nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the Novel Coronavirus. Within a fortnight, the National Commission of Women (NCW) reported a 100% rise in complaints of domestic violence cases. A nationwide WhatsApp number was then launched by the NCW to provide an alternate method for women to report domestic abuse.

While there was an evident spike in the number of domestic violence cases in India at the point in time, strangely enough, the NCW monthly data spoke some alternate truth. It showed an overall decrease in the complaints received during the months of lockdown in comparison to even the initial months of 2020 (Complaints received: January: 538, February: 523, March: 501, April: 377). However, the gradual relaxation of the lockdown saw a subsequent surge in the complaints. While 552 complaints were recorded in the month of May, June saw over 730 complaints. This data shows that while the concern of a rapid increase in the domestic violence cases during the lockdown was valid, the instances were not actively reported.

In 2020, between March 25 and May 31, 1,477 complaints of domestic violence were made by women. This 68-day period recorded more complaints than those received between March and May in the previous 10 years.

Barriers to reporting amidst a pandemic

The series of COVID-19 lockdowns in India diminished the opportunities of reporting of domestic violence cases. Here's why:

Restricted movement: The lockdown incapacitated women by preventing them from moving to safer places in cases of violence and abuse. With men and women cohabiting together for longer periods, the privacy of women plummeted and instances of violence rose.

Handicapped mediums of communication: The Whatsapp number launched by the NCW had a limited reach as only 38% of women in India own phones and fewer have an internet connection, making this platform inaccessible to majority of women in the country.

Reduced contact with the natal family: Natal family is usually the first point of contact for the victim. They are not only essential in supporting the victim in filing a complaint but also facilitate filing of complaints to the police. The constant presence of the perpetrator made it difficult for the victims to

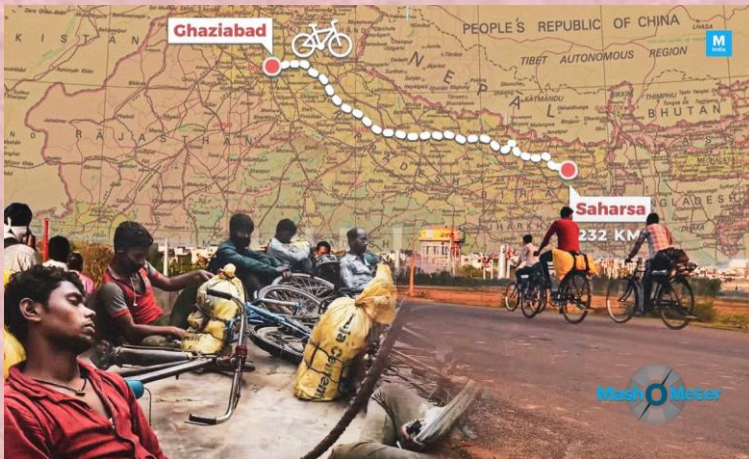
contact their first respondent which ultimately deterred them from reporting to institutionalised channels.

Unavailability of the formal support system: The machinery under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act had not been identified as an essential service during the lockdown. Hence, the protection officers were not able to visit households of victims, NGOs were not able to have physical interactions with them and the police officers being at the frontline in our effort to tackle COVID-19 were overstretched to help victims effectively.

While the nationwide restrictions have been relaxed, various state and district level lockdowns are invoked every now and then, allowing the pandemic of domestic violence to sprout alongside. We must not count violence against women as an inevitable outcome of a crisis but improve the otherwise delayed policy implications to address the situation.

Nupur 3rd Yr

THE STORY OF A JOURNEY OF '1232 KMS'



It's been a year since the lockdown in India. While it left the entire population startled, it affected the underprivileged more than anyone else. India witnessed an exodus of migrant workers that

were out of jobs and forced to leave the cities for their hometowns without proper transport arrangement. While t

he lockdown was lifted months ago, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown no signs of abating. On its first anniversary, journalist-turned-director Vinod Kapri released a gut-wrenching documentary on the real story behind the scenes of the mass exodus. In the documentary, Kapri and a small crew

accompany three batches of migrants who flee Ghaziabad for their Villages in Bihar. After losing their jobs in the construction sector, the men set out on their bicycles. This film is dedicated to 'the million faceless workers who build our nation.' As Kapri follows the cyclists for a week in his car, he provides an eye-witness account of this journey. This journey involves all kinds of emotions from camaraderie, grim humour, fear, restlessness, many obstacles, instances of apathy but also kindness. A dhaba owner especially opened his eatery for the migrants and allowed them to spend the night at the dhaba. The owner said 'it's the least I can do'. Another man served the samosas to the travellers, while various cycle repair shops raise their shutters only to help them. A few truck drivers offered lifts to them, risking the foul temper of the cops, expediting their journey a few hundred kms per day. If there's one thing Kapri's documentary more than successfully delves into, it's the working-

class's distrust of the government machinery. At one point, when Kapri asks why they're taking the roads through the villages instead of the highways, the men recall how they were beaten up near Hapur. One of them goes on to say 'they would rather die, than be 'rescued' by the law enforcement. All the men lose their cool after being locked up at a 'quarantine facility' on the Bihar border, that doesn't seem to have been cleaned. However, in a later part of the journey, Ritesh, one of the migrant workers tells the camera how his 'rage' has evaporated once he's near home.

1232 Kms will remain a stark snapshot of crisis, many years after the government denying its very existence, they will move on. In a country, where most news channels with far-reaching impact have let this crisis unfold in the background without any coverage, 1232 Kms lies in an enviable position without a contemporary film tackling a similar theme.

Aamiya Dhand 3rd Yr

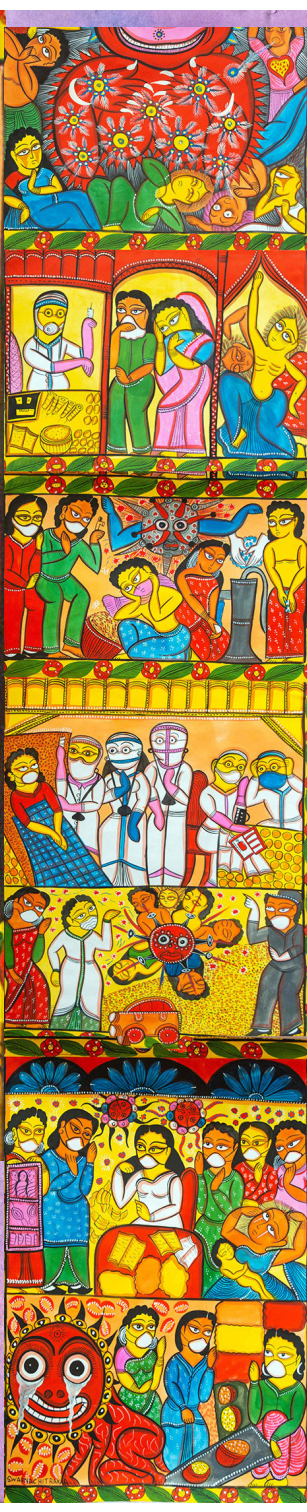


Framing the Infection

when art bears the reflections of the times



Depiction of the life behind masks, *the new normal*, in Patua Artwork, West Bengal

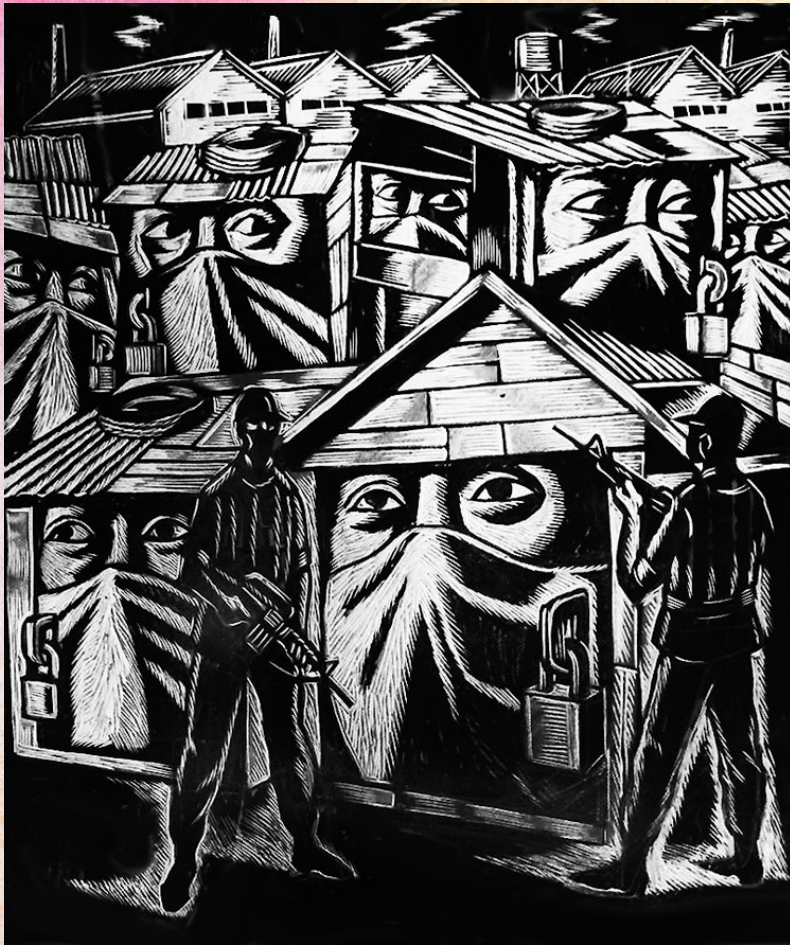


**WASH YOUR
HANDS**



**SAFETY IS
AN ACT OF
SOLIDARITY**

As a contribution to an online project curating pandemic inspired art at the Orange County Museum, Southern California, this poster talks about a public service information.



Two Representations of life in Quarantine

Alone I live, mute

Unsure if my voice still works

Testing, one, two, three...

a haiku by Tricia, Canberra.

Raising hope through colors!
Street Art in New York as part of a project to draw artwork at the site of closed businesses due to the pandemic



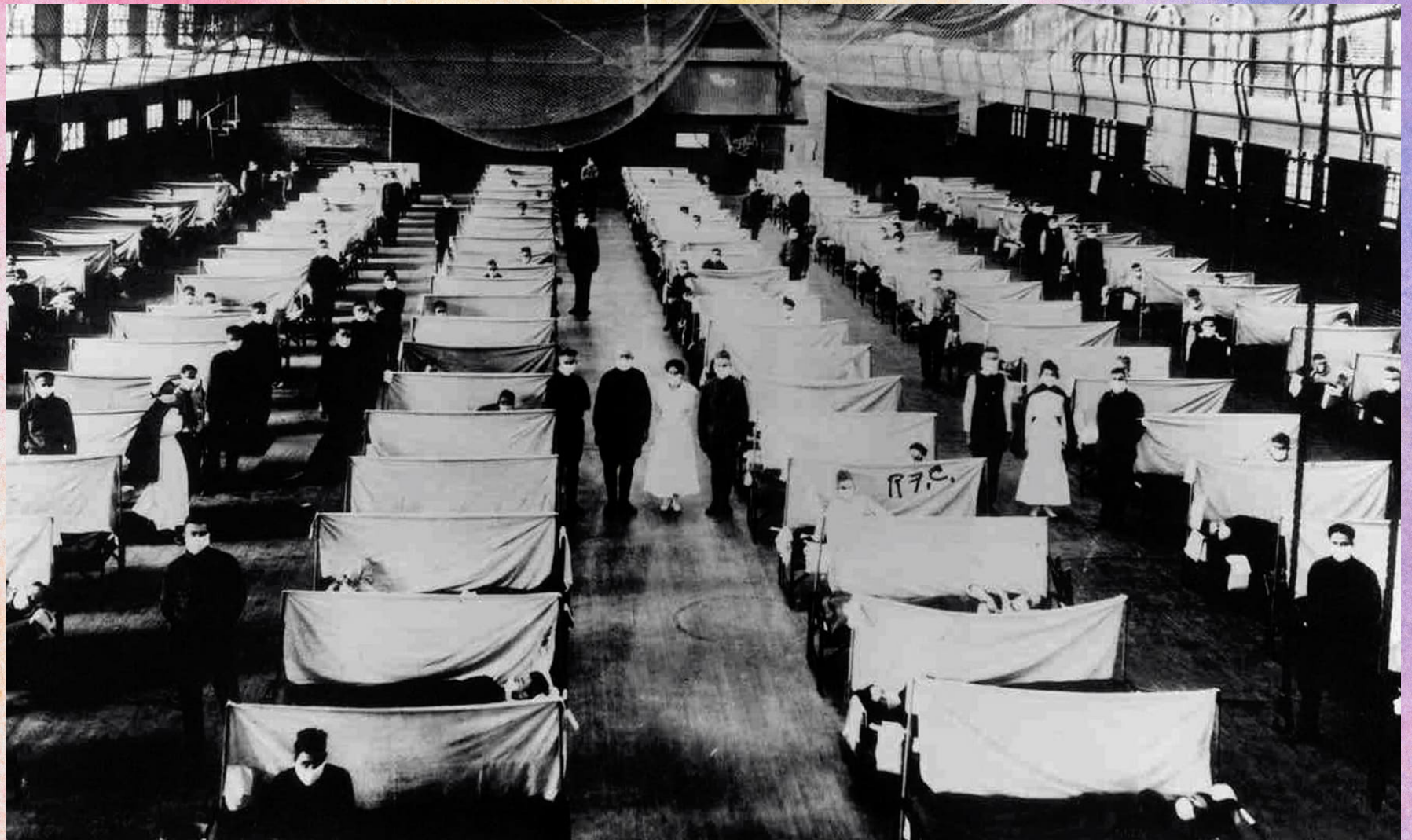


**"La Liseuse" (The Reader) by Belgian painter Alfred Émile Léopold Stevens in 1860, as imagined in the pandemic.
Credit: The Fitzwilliam Museum/FME, Cambridge**

le désespoir,

Frontline workers in the health crisis, a depiction





An early image of the inflictions of the Spanish flu, 1918



Stories that inspire



Srinandan Sundaram

(Executive Director- Sales and Customer Development, HUL)

The Hindustan Unilever Limited continued with the production of hand sanitizers, soaps and hand washes when the outbreak escalated and everything went into a frenzy. By his own admission, Srinandan Sundaram said, “To be honest, the scale of the pandemic really hit me when one afternoon, we were all having lunch. We had to maintain a distance of 3 feet from each other, making it impossible for us to converse. As I looked around, I’d never felt more alone, but still—we were together in that too and somehow it felt comfortable.”

The HUL has amped up its production by several times and also providing for home delivery of products in the remotest corners of the country. The team in production has been working for longer hours than it ever had and when it was communicated to the members that they would have to overtime, not one person resisted. Several members in production did not go back home for five days straight in order to supply the increasing demands in the market.



One afternoon, we were all having lunch. We had to maintain a distance of 3 feet from each other making it impossible for us to converse. As I looked around, I’d never felt more alone...





Aryan Mishra

When Aryan Mishra came across an article that a topper had committed suicide because she could not afford as the teaching-learning suddenly shifted to online mode, he was shook. Born in an underprivileged family and making it fairly better in his life, he very well understood the plight of the girl.

Aryan Mishra is an astronomer and a scientist. He had bought a telescope at the age of thirteen with his pocket money to explore the universe.

When he read that article, he knew he had to do something about it. He began to spread a word about the plight of students aggressively via social media and collected Rs 51000 through crowdfunding in a month, with which he gave phones to 11 students coming from underprivileged backgrounds.

Recently he has developed a system through which the donor can directly contact the child in need of a phone or laptop. Within a month he donated 41 phones to students across the country.

“I knew I had to do something about it, so I put up Instagram stories; my friends suggested that I start a crowd-funder. I aggressively began spreading the word via social media and through friends—in a month, I raised Rs 55000. With that money, I bought 11 phones and distributed them to the kids in my area whose studies were suffering.

I’ve been there; I know what it feels like to be limited by your means. I know what it feels like to be written off before we’re even given a chance—because we’re born here, we’re expected to live and die here. These kids don’t want your sympathy; they just want a chance, one chance to prove what they’re made of. That’s all I’m trying to give them.”



“We’re brothers-
our jobs may be
different, but
we’re both on duty
and serving the
society. We’re all
proud of you.”

LAEEQ **(Delivery Executive, Amazon)**

One day, he delivered a parcel to a police camp on night duty, as he was leaving, one of them said to him, “We’re brothers- our jobs may be different, but we’re both on duty and serving the society. We’re all proud of you.” That night he went back home with the biggest smile on his face.

Laeq is a delivery executive with Amazon.in. As the pandemic struck, he overnight became the sole breadwinner of a family of 7. But more than that in his own words, he went from having a job to having a purpose because apart from feeding his own family, he had a job to deliver essentials to other families so that they could eat and stay safe. Though he did not meet any of the families where he delivered packages too, he received phone calls from people to say thanks after they received their packages from their watchmen. These small gestures really kept him going.

The roads were empty during the lockdown and it would look unusual and get lonely at times. Still he believed that it was his responsibility to deliver the essentials to families and he prays that we come out of this situation soon.



Rema Rajeswari (District Police Chief, Mehboobnagar)

A month into the lockdown, she received a distress call from a lady from Kanpur, as her sister hadn't called her up in 3 days and she was worried as her husband was abusive. She sent a dispatch team and found the woman in a very pitiable condition. She admitted her to a hospital and filed a case against her husband.

This incident made her realise that a lot of domestic abuse victims were stuck with their perpetrators without anywhere to go. So to help them, she set up 'Mobile Safety'- a vehicle with her team members doing rounds across the district and in 2 weeks they had 40 cases. Alongside, more members of her team stepped up to help the general populace.

This one time, her colleague dropped a pregnant lady to the hospital in time in the police ambulance and came back beaming!

Soon, the workers started migrating to their hometowns. After unsuccessful attempts at making them stop, they set food banks along the highway. And once the railways opened, her team helped in getting 11000 workers reach home in under 15 days.

Even after her team members tested positive for the virus, their only question was, "Madam! When can we get back in action?"

"She was badly bruised, hadn't had a single drop of water in 3 days and was writhing in pain. We rushed her to the hospital and filed a case against her husband."



After landing, the passengers cheered for us before leaving the plane. A passenger even said, “I never thought a flight home would mean so much.”

Captain Swati Rawal **(Commander Boeing 777)**

On March 20, 2020, Captain Swati Rawal got a call from her team asking her to pilot a flight from Rome to Delhi the next day to bring back 263 trapped Indian passengers.

She had five seconds to answer and the thought of those 263 passengers desperately waiting to get back home made her agree. The next day she left, kissing her 5 year old son and 18 months old daughter goodbye.

When she and her crew boarded the flight, she realised that it was the eeriest evening of her life- there were no passengers, just 8 hours of silence. But after the passengers boarded the flight in Rome, for a brief moment it felt that the pandemic never existed. The passengers cheered after the plane landed.

After what felt like a rescue mission, she headed home. She kept herself isolated for 14 days, which meant that she could not be near her husband and kids. The sight of her kids yearning for her. After what felt like an eternity, she came out of isolation and when she held her kids, “I felt what those passengers must have felt—an ache to be close to loved ones. And if it means that we can bring families together, I’m ready to pilot as many flights as it takes to bring my fellow Indians home, safe and sound.”



“Ammi lost her job and then because we couldn’t afford it, I had to drop out of school.....
But I promise you didi, I will go back to school.”

Chotu (Mumbai)

Chotu, as he is fondly called, is a fourteen year old boy from Mumbai. His father died when he was young and he and his sisters have been brought up by his mother since then.

As the country went into the lockdown following the outbreak of the pandemic, his mother lost his job and consequentially, Chotu had to drop out of school. When there was nothing left at home to even eat, he went to a nearby *kirana* store and was hired as the *chotu* of the store-owner and earned ₹s 100 per day, which was enough not to let his family go to bed with hungry stomachs every night.

After working there for months, he noticed a man running his own *tapri* to sell tea. From there he got the idea to sell tea and went and talked to a *parathewala* to let him sell tea at his stall. He works from 1 pm to 1:30 am.

Talking to Karishma Mehta of ‘Humans of Bombay’, he revealed that he will return to school as soon as he can as he loves studying and wants to fulfil his mother’s dream of becoming a fighter pilot, but until then he is more than happy to serve people his ‘worry melting *chai*’, and also offers her a cup.



Anonymous

He is a migrant worker from Uttarakhand, who had been working in Pune for 12 years. He earned Rs 18000 and supported a family of 5 single-handedly.

When the country went into lockdown, his employer was kind enough to let him live in his guest house. Unfortunately that room was being shared by 20 people, making it impossible for the inhabitants to socially distance. His employer had stopped paying him since February 2020, and later asked him to deliver food and groceries to a nearby hospital to continue living in the guest house. Having no other option, he had to start for his hometown, though he was lucky enough to get a railway ticket by the Maharashtra government.

After reaching his village, he prayed hard that he should not develop any symptoms as the sanitisation and other cleansing facilities were limp and poor in the trains and buses in which he had travelled. His family also faced social ostracism from other villagers as they eyed him with suspicion. In a time when a lot of people were cribbing about their inability to go out for fun, he and thousands like him were left wondering how they would be able to provide for their families hereon.

I'm in my 30s and have to start my life all over again. I've seen how terrible it is for thousands like me with my own eyes—our only fault being that we're poor with no choice. I hear there are a few who are complaining about not being able to go out, while here I am wondering—how will I feed my family? How will we live

DEPARTMENT AT A GLANCE

the year gone by...

19th
Nov
2020

**A Webinar on
Legislative
Processes in India,
in association with
the Praja
Foundation;
Guest Speaker:
Saket Surya,
Analyst, PRS**



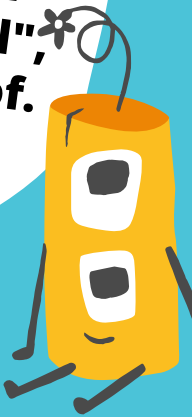
1-13th Nov.
2020

**A short term
course on Gender
Studies in
association with
Forum for
Democracy**



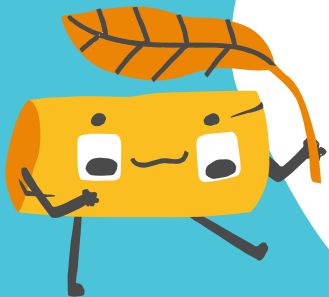
10th
March
2021

**A career counselling
workshop "Political
Science: Research
and Analytical Skill",
Guest Speaker: Prof.
Sanjay Kumar,
Lokniti**

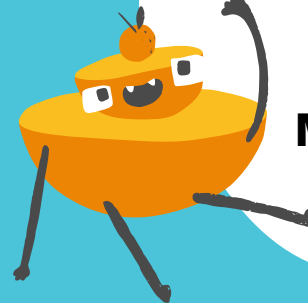


Aug.
2020-Mar
2021

**Cinemas
Sambal
Knowledge
Club
sessions**



**IQAC-directed
Peer-mentoring
&
Research
Mentoring
Projects**



Aug. 2020-
Mar 2021