СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ГЛОБАЛЬНЫЕ ВЫЗОВЫ

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УРОКИ КРИЗИСА COVID-19: ВРЕМЯ ДЛЯ САМОАНАЛИЗА

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LESSONS OF COVID-19 CRISIS: TIME FOR INTROSPECTION

Аннотация. Пандемия COVID-19 беспрецедентно повлияла на то, как мы работаем, думаем и живем. После борьбы с пандемией и принятия ответных мер; пришло время для обзора и самоанализа; время для изучения уроков. В этом документе делается попытка выделить определенные моменты, которые необходимо оценить и проанализировать, чтобы понять все последствия кризиса COVID-19. Этот кризис привел к изменению политики глобализации и предоставил государству абсолютные полномочия влиять на жизнь и деятельность каждого гражданина. Кроме того, это ослабило социальные связи между людьми. Мы также должны рассматривать бедность как самую крупную пандемию, которая когда-либо затрагивала жизни миллиардов людей на разных континентах. Цифровой разрыв также необходимо преодолеть между различными слоями общества.

Ключевые слова: *COVID-19, блокировки, социальное воздействие, глобализация, кризис.*

Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the way we work, think and live in an unprecedented way. After facing and responding to the pandemic; it's time for review and introspection; time for learning lessons. This Paper attempts to highlight certain points that need to be assessed and analyzed to understand the full impact of COVID-19 crisis. This crisis has resulted in reversing the policies of globalization and given absolute powers to the State for influencing the life and activities of each & every citizen. Also, it has weakened the social bonding among people. We also need to view poverty as the biggest pandemic ever that impacts lives of billions of people across continents. Digital divide has also to be bridged among various sections of society.

Key words: *COVID-19, Lockdowns, Social Impact, Globalization, Crisis.*

Crisis as an Opportunity

What is a "Crisis"? The dictionary defines a crisis as "a time of intense difficulty." Crisis, as a medical term, is defined as "a turning point." In the Greek, crisis is "a decision."

Putting these together and you have John Maxwell's definition of a crisis: "An intense time of difficulty requiring a decision that will be a turning point."

Hence, crisis is an opportunity that we cannot afford to waste as it provides an opportunity for self introspection and review the old paradigms. It also promotes efforts to rethink, redesign and rebuild our lives.

Hence, it's time to go for serious introspection. I would like to highlight some of the lessons that could be learnt from COVID-19 crisis, and also some salient points that need our consideration to build resilient societies.

A 'Pause' Button in Life

First, let us have a look at some positive impact points. Before COVID crisis, we all had been running fast in a rat race, competing with each other, neglecting our own health and family. Where to? What for? We had no idea. Now, after prolonged lockdowns, the 'Pause' Button has been pressed in our life. We have been given an opportunity to reassess our priorities and understand that "Direction is more important than speed".

Value of Togetherness

We had opportunity to spend more quality time with our family members who usually felt neglected due to our work pressures. Now, we have come to realize the importance of togetherness with family. We could find time to have a better understanding of each other in family. We have understood that our homes and families remain the most dependable sources of strength and emotional support.

Reversing the Process of Globalization

I would like to correlate the COVID-19 crisis and our responses to it to a broader context of Globalization. We know that during past three decades with the process of Globalization and internet technology, we had attempted to produce a borderless world, ensuring free movement of goods, people and ideas with the help of internet and communication technology.

However, past 5 years have seen emergence of widespread dissent against globalization policies throughout the world. Of course, the fruits of globalization could not be shared by all sections of societies equitably; and a course correction was needed. However, the situation was cleverly turned by the regional forces to their political advantage using nationalistic sentiments as a tool to discourage the attempts for forging a unified interconnected world.

Now, COVID crisis has provided the justification and strength to all these forces for promoting protectionist, inward-looking policies. It needs serious introspection if such policies can be beneficial in long-run.

Creating Boundaries Again

While the process of Globalization was meant to break the State boundaries for free movements, the Governments all over the world got busy in sealing their borders in response to COVID-19 pandemic. Even, within a country, individual States started getting their borders sealed, disallowing fellow countrymen to enter their respective States. There were strict restrictions on movements and all occupational activities. Of course, now these restrictions are being eased to some extent due to economic reasons, but the damage is already done.

Granting of absolute powers to the Governments and local administrations to influence our lives, our occupations, our movements may also have negative effects in the long term..

Shrinking of Minds & Hearts

The worst effect has been on the mindset of people everywhere. While globalization had attempted to shrink the world into a small global village, COVID-19 has resulted into shrinking of minds and hearts of citizens.

We have become fearful of everyone, including our neighbours and friends. Compassion has given way to Suspicion. There is loss of trust with everyone else. We have developed highly self-centred and selfish attitude. The prolonged lockdowns have weakened the social fabric and emotional bonds. Each family is turning into an island of its own.

Social Distancing led to Social Discrimination for anyone who is suspect carrier of disease. It would have been better to term it as Physical distancing rather than Social Distancing.

Restrictions and Corona virus may vanish in some time, but it will take long to regain our humanitarian attitude back.

Blaming Migrants & Minorities:

There have been growing tendencies to blame the migrants and minorities for all the social and economic ills in any country. For present crisis also, similar accusations have been put forward.

The visuals of vast migrant population walking hundreds of miles to their home lands will keep us haunting for long time to come. Was it necessary for the whole lot of workers in informal sector to sacrifice their livelihoods?

If the Bottom of Pyramid becomes weak, can upper layers sustain long?

With millions of families losing their sources of earning livelihood, there are threats of high unemployment and social unrest in the days to come.

Poverty: The Biggest Ongoing Pandemic

Whether it is a natural calamity like earthquake, floods or man-made crisis situations like wars, terrorism or social riots, it is the poor population that suffers the most.

Hence, I would like to state that the biggest ongoing pandemic that humanity faces is Poverty, prevalent in all regions since ages. Poverty is clubbed with unemployment, lack of education, lack of healthcare, lack of opportunities. It also leads to inequality and social discrimination.

National Security vs. People Security

There has been always great emphasis on National Security; and billions of dollars are spent every year in procuring sophisticated armament & weapons. It's time we also pay attention to People Security, and earmark greater amount of resources for creating better healthcare facilities and hygiene.

Just imagine, if even 2% of the funds earmarked for Defence could be diverted for better education and healthcare, every country could have produced more medicos and saved many precious lives.

Digital Divide

After COVID-19 crisis, there is going to be more emphasis on contact-free transactions and digitalization in all aspects of life including education and economy. However, the vast scale of digital divide that exists between different sections of society. It reflects the lack of digital literacy and access to modern information and communication technology that is prevailing in people located in rural areas and among elderly.

If above issues get serious attention from Governments and societies, we can redesign and rebuild our world. Let's not waste this opportunity.