

Covid-19 Pandemic And Its Impact On Human Society -An Analysis

Ratul Mazumdar ^{1,*}, Mr Suman Barman ², Mr.Dilip Deka ³

¹Part-Time Lecturer Bhawanipur Anchalik College

²M.phil Scholar, Gauhati University

³Department of Assamese, Bhawanipur Anchalik College

E-mail-²barmansuman677@gmail.com

Abstract

Human civilisation has experienced several epidemics like Cholera, Influenza, Malaria, Plague, and HIV/AIDS and witnessed its tragic consequences. The corona virus is a suddenly emerged tiniest but malignant virus which pose a great threat to the existence of global society. Due to its quickly infectious nature, people of the world have to develop the habit of social distancing for the survival of each other. Nowadays, Covid-19 is a newly emerged global pandemic that has resulted in the levitate of severe pressure, anxiety and tension and exceptional challenges among the masses of the entire world. The occurrence of COVID-19 for the first was seen in the Wuhan city of China in December 2019 and on 11th March 2020, this disease was declared as a pandemic by the WHO. Right now most of the countries of the world have been badly affected by this disease with a dramatic loss of lives of people across the world. It is said that due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the society of human being is facing so many numbers of different problems in their socio-political life. The economy of many countries was almost collapsed and the relationships among the countries are also gradually weakening politically. Therefore, through this study, try to attempt to point out the major impacts and consequences of the Covid-19 on the social, political, and economic dimensions of Assam.

Key words: Covid-19, Political, Social, Economic and Assam

Introduction

Covid-19 is a global epidemic with high mortality which put impacts on every sphere of human life. The most critical pandemics like Plague, Ebola, Cholera, Influenza, Malaria, and HIV/AIDS were some of the diseases which produced serious challenges to the survival of the entire human society and also vastly affected the socio-economy as well as the polity of the world. Covid-19 is a newly emerged global epidemic that created serious tension and challenges across the globe. The outburst of Covid19 was for the first time identified in Wuhan city of China in December 2019 and on 11th March 2020 it was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (Shoeb, Aslam, Naaz, 2020:361). According to the report of WHO, the Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) is the main reason for Covid-19 disease and this pandemic can spread through both biotic and abiotic mechanism. The common syndromes of Covid-19 disease are cold, cough, fever and tiredness. It can be said that the Covid-19 disease is quickly scattering across the world. Nowadays, every part of the globe almost has been infected by this disturbing virus.

Advanced countries like America, Italy, Japan, China etc. has failed to control the harmful effects of this pandemic. The Covid--19 became a challenge for the hospital and medical to fight against this pandemic. Due to this disease numbers of places became containment zones for a long period and the people lived in that containment zone, it became difficult for them to survive due to the absence of food and other necessary things. As of 4th July 2020, a total of 10922324 people got contaminated and 523011 people had died across the world and this number is growing rapidly (Reports WHO). Covid-19 and its effect is not only limited to the health of the people but also has a huge impact on the socio-political and economic aspects of the world. The economy of many countries was collapsed after the outbreak of Covid-19. The protective measures and policies to overcome this pandemic adopted by the Governments to stay away from Covid-19 were such as Lockdown, home quarantines, social distancing etc. Apart from these, national and international services (trades and commerce,

airways, railways etc.) and other transports services have been suspended for a long time. The manufacturing industries, malls for shopping and school, colleges and universities were also closed for an unsure period of time. Therefore, through this study, it tries to is to understand the social, political and economic impacts of Covid-19 on the state of Assam.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this research article is to study the impact of Covid-19 on Social, Economical, political and educational aspects with special reference to Assam.

Methodology of the Study

This a conceptual paper so based on secondary data. The secondary data has been collected from different sources likes Books, Journals, Newspapers, Magazines and Internet etc.

Discussion

Assam is the most affected worst states among all northeastern states in India by Covid-19. In Assam, the first corona positive case was found on 31 March 2020. Before that, the covid -19 pandemic was not able to hit the state. After the last week of March, the infected corona positive cases started to grow slowly in Assam and as of 7th March 2021, a total of 216036 Covid-19 positive cases detected including 214676 recoveries, three migrations and 1091 deaths (Reports of govt. of Assam). The present situation of Assam is very normal and the masses of the region are enjoying a normal life. At that time of covid -19 in Assam when this disease was very harmful to the people then the government of Assam especially health minister DR. Himanta Biswa Sarma seems to be very active in protecting the lives of the people of Assam. This pandemic became a disturbance in the social and political life of the people and for the economy of Assam. Therefore we try to focus on the following discussion about the impacts of covid 19 on social, political and economic spheres of the region:

1. Social Impact: The social impact of covid -19 was very destructive. The pandemic Covid-19 has a big impact on the society of Assam as well as on the social life of the people of Assam. Due to the outbreak of covid-19, the Assam Government has decided to shut down all the places of entertainment, religion and tourist on March 15, 2020. The Government Assam also made a declaration for making it compulsory to maintain social distancing and wear a mask. Apart from this, the Assam Government has also decided to impose institutional or home quarantine for 14 days to those people who were lived outside Assam and those people who come from other states or countries. According to the database of the Assam Government, as of 12 AUG, 2020, a total of 195700 persons were sent for institutional or home quarantine and 10,43,331 persons screened at different places in Assam (Media Bulletin on Covid-19 of Assam). The policies of social distancing and home quarantine taken by the Assam government roughly damage the social relations of the masses. Due to the strategy of home isolation during the time of lockdown, those people who come from other states or countries have suffered so many problems of stress physically and mentally. The mental health of the people was also badly affected to a large extent due to the outbreak of covid 19. The people of Assam have been suffering from various types of stress such as depression, frustration; anxiety and appetite due to having nationwide lockdown like the people of other parts of the world, and for these mental healths related cases were increasing rapidly in the state. Some social impacts of Covid- 19 were as follows:

- Committed suicide due to could not pay room rent for lockdown, (a elder man committed suicide from Darrang District in Assam)
- Deprived of online classes due to lack of smartphones. (Committed suicide by a young boy of Chirrang District for deprived online classes due to not having smartphones)
- Women became the worst victim due to domestic violence after the outbreak of Covid-19. (The Chairperson of NCW Rekha Sharma reported that from March 24 till April 1 the NCW has received 69

domestic violence complaints from different parts of the country and this number is increasing day by day (The Sentinel, 3 April 2020))

- During the time of lockdown, three women were harassed sexually and physically at home (The National Family Health Survey-4)
- Since lockdown, the cases of cybercrime and violence in home have been increasing in Assam. The manager of Women Helpline number Assam Nilakshi Sharma reported that a total of 54 cases of domestic violence and 11 cases of internet blackmailing have received in Assam since the lockdown period. She also said that a woman was hiding from her husband in the neighbour's house and it took three hours to rescue her from Karimganj district (Firstpost, 13 April 2020).
- During the time of lockdown in Assam, girls were sexually abused and also had blackmailed by the old boys covering the age of 22 to 26 years.
- Due to this pandemic, the religious and cultural life of the people of Assam was also spoiled. To settle down the problem of coronavirus the government of Assam also decided to stop all religious places of Assam like a temple, masjid, church etc. even the most religious place of Assam Kamakhya temple was also shut down for this pandemic.
- For this pandemic, our main festival Bihu which is held in April every year was also cancelled. Eid the main festival of Muslim was also cancelled due to lockdown for this pandemic.
- Covid- 19 has a huge impact on the education system in Assam. For this corona pandemic, the educational institutions were shut down across the state from 15th March 2020 to October 2021. Due to the lockdown of the educational institutions, it was not possible to provide education and knowledge to students and also was not able to conduct examinations for the promotion of students.

Political Impact

The political system of Assam was also affected by the pandemic covid 19 to a large extent. The political activities of Assam have faced so many obstacles due to the emergence of covid-19. Taking this pandemic as a serious threat, the Assam Government conjured the Epidemic Act of 1897 and delayed the ongoing budget session of the state. To stop the rapid spread of coronavirus, the Assam Government passed numerous regulations to fight against the pandemic such as The Assam Covid-19 Regulations 2020 and The Assam Covid-19 Containment Regulations 2020 etc (Akhil, 2020). This pandemic also put a big impact on the BTAD election of Assam. The period of the existing council of BTC ended on 27 April 2020 and the election commission of Assam decided to scheduled the BTAD election on 4 April 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ELECTION Commission of Assam finalized to postpone the election for an unclear period of time. (Report of State Election Commission of Assam). Therefore, the rule of BTAD of Assam was under the power of the Governor on 27th April 2020 until elections are held (Mazumdar, 2020). Moreover, the well known political leaders of Assam were also affected by this pandemic. Badruddin Ajmal the prominent leader of AIUDF and MP of Dhubri Parliamentary Constituency became the first patient of Covid-19 from a Political point of view according to a newspaper (The Sentinel, 11 July 2020). Bolin Chetia, the MLA of Sadiya legislative constituency of Assam, a great politician was also tested positive for Covid-19 (Saikia, 2020). Akhil Gogoi, the social activist and the main person of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti was also tested positive for Covid-19 when he was in central jail Guwahati on 11 July 2020. The opposition leaders suspected that the ruling party was doing politics on behalf of Corona. The opposition leaders like Debabrata Saikia and Aminul Islam, also criticized and suspected the works and policies of the Assam Government for doing during the time of Covid-19. Therefore, Assam Police arrest Aminul for such type of controversial statement. (The Hindu, 2 April 2020). According to Mr Dipanka Kumar Nath, President of ASSU, the policies and strategies are taken by the Assam Government to avoid Coronavirus are drama (Singh, 2020). After getting these types of statements from the leaders of the opposition party and the organizations KMSS and AASU, the prominent leader and the health

Minister of Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, strongly denounced such statements and challenged the leaders to come to the hospital and look after the Corona infected patients without wearing PPE kit (Singh, 2020).

3. Economic Impact: Covid-19 has its impact not only in society and polity but also in the field of the economy of Assam also. Coronavirus badly affects the economy of Assam.

Assam Government faced a huge economic loss due to the announcement of lockdown by the Assam Government. Assam Government faced a huge loss because of the shutdown of various places of entertainment, shopping malls, cinema halls, bars, transportations, hotels etc for the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020 in Assam.

Over 27 lakh youths in Assam will become unemployed due to the economic conditions in the aftermath of Covid 19 and the consequently prolonged lockdown. This will result in an increase in the unemployment rate of the state to 16 to 27 per cent from the present rate of eight per cent.

The poverty rate may go up to about 50 percent in the state also.

The revenue for the current fiscal year was dropped from Rs 12423 crores to Rs 18236 crores due to the outbreak of Covid-19 (Times of India, 2020). According to the Finance Minister of the state Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, the state's average GST collection per month was Rs 693 crores in the year 2019 but in April 2020 it was Rs 147 crores and in May it was Rs 360 crores

Due to Covid-19, it is estimated that the livelihoods of 67 lakh people will face disruptions. According to the report, the categories of casual labourers and self-employed people are expected to face severe stress and hardship(The Sentinel Newspaper).

Consequently, it is also estimated that due to the large scale return of migrant people to the state due to covid-19, there will be a significant fall in the inflow remittances to the state; a part of which around 16 percent is used for agricultural investment. It is also predicted that there will be a drop in the agricultural investment in the coming season by 10 to 25 percent which is equivalent to Rs 786 to Rs 1,572 crores. (The Sentinel Newspaper)

It is also predicted that the Handloom sector has also been badly hit by covid -19 and lockdown.

According to the Ministry of Statistics India's growth in the four quarters of the fiscal year, 2020 went down to 3.1%.

Due to the nationwide lockdown for coronavirus, the production sector had fallen. With an increasing number of active cases of Covid-19, the Government strictly locked down the factories and companies also. The operations of factories and industries are closed and hence slow down the production level at a rapid rate.

The Assam Government also spent lots of money for giving minimum facilities to those people who were indifferent quarantine centres across the state. Apart from this, the Government of Assam also provided free rice and vegetables to the needy people of the region during the time of lockdown.

Educational Impact: As a result of the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, unprecedented effects have been observed in various parts of Assam. This has led to unexpected challenges, especially in the field of education. Almost all the students in Assam have been away from their respective educational institutions since March 15, 2020. On the other hand, Covid-19 has brought stability to the teaching and direct learning process. To cope with this difficult situation, various educational institutions in Assam have been trying to make the teaching and learning process with the help of various mass media and technology. Government agencies and various electronic channels have also taken steps to provide digital education. However, in economically backward states like Assam, students of all classes are not able to avail of this facility. There have been cases of suicide due to the non-availability of technical equipment.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it can be said that Covid-19 has put an undesirable impact on the social, political and economic sector of Assam. Due to the fall down of the economic sector of Assam, the lives of the people is also affected by this pandemic. This may be the time to reset. Never before has the world come to a standstill where one can pick apart the many moving pieces. We have the opportunity to rethink everything. If we do things right, we may be able to fix challenges that face humankind- environmental damage, inequality etc. Most importantly, we must ensure something like this never happens again. History says that humankind has never learnt from history. Let's hope that it's a thing of the past.

References

1. Anxiety in times of COVID-19, domestic violence and cybercrime: Helplines in Assam haven't stopped ringing since lockdown - Health news, Firstpost. (2020, April 13). Firstpost. <https://www.firstpost.com/health/coronavirus-outbreakanxiety-in-times-of-covid19domesticviolenceandcybercrimehelplinesinassamhaven'tstoppedringingsincelockdown8254801.html>
2. Assam government's response to COVID-19. (2020, May 6). PRSIndia. <https://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/assamgovernment%E2%80%99s-response-covid-19>
3. Assam: Coronavirus lockdown triggers rise in suicide, mental health issues. (2020, May 12).INSIDENE. <https://www.insidene.com/assamcoronaviruslockdowntriggersriseinsuicidemental-health-issues/>
4. BASUMATARY, R. (2020, June 23). Assam: With no Smartphone, 15-year-old student commitssuicideafterfailingtoattendonlineclasses. NORTHEASTNOW: <https://nenow.in/northeastnews/assam/assamwithnosmartphone15yearoldstudentcommitssuicideafterfailingtoattendonlineclasses.html>
5. Basu, S. (2020, April 20). A parallel pandemic as domestic abuse victims trapped with their abusers. The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/society/covid-19lockdowndomestic-abuse-victims-trapped-withabusers/article31388228>.
6. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) – World Health Organization. (n.d.).
7. WHO | World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus2019?gclid=Cj0KCQjw9b_4BRCMARIsADMUIyrldeuVmu168wxgmNuyd19O5BdILrxDRZ_KIZ6Hi26QMXc3wr4EfdgaA uWJEALw_wcB
8. Desk, E. (2020, May 16). Explained: How COVID-19 has affected the global economy. The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-how-has-covid-19-affected-the-global-economy-6410494/>
9. Desk, S. D. (2020, July 18). Out-of-work Guwahati welder commits suicide amid lockdown.TheSentinelBreakingNews, NorthEastNews, TopStories, IndiaNews&WorldNews. <https://www.sentinelassam.com/guwahati-city/out-of-work-guwahati-welder-commits-suicide-amid-lockdown-489561>
10. Desk, S. D. (2020, April 3). Lockdown: Domestic violence cases on the rise during coronavirus shutdown. The Sentinel - Breaking News, North East News, Top Stories, India News & World News. <https://www.sentinelassam.com/nationalnews/lockdown-domestic-violence-cases-on-the-rise-during-coronavirus-shutdown/>
11. Duffin, E. (2020, June 18). COVID-19: Percent change in GDP by country 2020. Statista.com. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1102991/covid-19-percent-change-gdp-country/>
12. Election Commission of India. <https://eci.gov.in/>

13. First corona case in Assam: 52-year-old tested positive in Silchar medical college. (2020, March 31). Barak Bulletin. https://www.barakbulletin.com/en_US/first-corona-case-in-assam-52-year-old-tested-positive-in-silchar-medicalcollege/
14. International foundation for electoral system. (2020, June 17). Elections Postponed Due to COVID-19 - As of July 15, 2020. IFES | The International Foundation for Electoral Systems. https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/elections_postponed_due_to_covid-19.pdf
15. Mazumdar, P. (2020, April). Governor's rule imposed in Assam's Bodoland territorial area districts. TheNewIndianExpress. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/apr/28/governors-rule-imposed-in-assamsbodoland-territorial-area-districts-2136187.html>
16. National Informatics Centre. (n.d.). Covid 19 Dashboard – Government of Assam. <https://covid19.assam.gov.in/>
17. News18. (2020, June 29). COVID-19 impact: Assam changes school calendar to April-march from JanDec. <https://www.news18.com/news/india/covid-19-impact-assam-changes-school-calendar-to-april-march-from-jan-dec2693347.html>
18. Pathak, Mohan(2020): "Social, Political and Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Assam: A Study",JCR,2020, 7(16): 2840-2847