



Socio-Cultural Impact of Covid-19 on Subaltern Section of Humanity

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Abstract:–

Since the inception of covid-19, the higher section of the society was spending leisure time at the comfort of their homes, there was a huge population of migrant workers who were starving and walking for miles in hope of reaching to their homeland. During the second wave also, it had been difficult for their survival. Life has always been tougher for subaltern section of humanity and during covid-19 times it became worse. It shows nothing but the antagonistic nature of humanity. If we look at their history, it is very clear that they always have been struggling for their basic rights, identity and victims of pauperization, alienation and exploitation. But on the other side covid-19 has also bring some positive impact on this section like increase in sex-ratio, increase in familial solidarity, decrease in rape incidents etc.

Keywords – Subaltern section, pauperization, antagonistic, alienation, covid-19.

Introduction:–

Practice of humanitarianism is of utmost importance especially in situations like covid-19. No doubt that there have been people who despite of having all the comforts, come out and help the subaltern section of the humanity, but we need to have more like them. Covid 19 times have been very tough for all those who were away from their homes, who were the daily wage earners and we need to make sure that if the third wave hits us, we do not let these people be in such a horrible situation that they had been in first and second wave. People have been suffering a lot for meeting their daily needs of food and shelter. There have been deaths on railway tracks and roads because of heat, continuous walk, no food etc. In such situation only a humanitarian attitude can preserve our people belonging to subaltern section.

India has been a country of mosaic of culture, still living in harmony, this is only because of the tolerance and harmonious nature of people living here. People have also understood the importance of

companionship and need of familial bond. There have been helping hands for household chores which led to the increase in the solidarity of the family during this pandemic.

Review of Literature:–

- **Boniol et al.**, (2019) states Women are on the frontline of coronavirus as the majority of the world's healthcare and social care workers are female. The World Health Organization puts the figure at 70%.
- **Jens Zinn** (2020) writes Ulrich Beck's conceptualization of risk society as 'a new social condition, in which the state of exception becomes the new normal'. Ulrich Beck states that we are in contemporary times facing the unintended consequences of industrial modernity that we can no longer control or even predict the very threats that we have created on our own.
- **Monbiot** (2020) states that the power has not just shifted from private money to the state, but from both market and state to another place completely i.e. the commons. All around the world, communities have mobilized where governments failed.
- **Paula Braverman** (2020) for the UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab wrote that 'Inequality is our pre-existing condition.'

Objectives:–

1. To analyze the impact of covid-19 on subaltern section of humanity.
2. To analyze the need for support for subaltern section during and after covid-19 crisis.

Methodology:–

This research paper includes content analysis method using the secondary information produced by different authors and researchers and hence a theoretical research paper. For obtaining necessary information, various books, journals as well as websites have been studied by the researcher which has been mentioned in the reference section.

Analysis:–

Subaltern section of humanity whether migrant works, women, children, minorities etc. have been critically impacted since the inception of covid-19. There has been continuous need for supporting this section of humanity throughout the pandemic. There also have been many helping hands of humanitarian practitioners and government has also worked to support them through many schemes and policies. Some major impacts and need for supporting them are mentioned below:

The impact of covid-19 on subaltern section of humanity and need to support them

- **Women**

The pandemic has widened the pre-existing inequalities, unearthing vulnerabilities in social, economic and political systems which are in turn intensifying the negative impacts of the pandemic. As the pandemic increased social and financial stress coupled with social isolation and restricted movement, gender-based violence has increased heavily. UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said in a statement calling the violence against women and girls "a shadow pandemic." A study of US National Bureau of Economic Research, found out that red zone districts saw 131% increase in domestic violence complaints compared to green zone districts. The

percentage for cyber-crime complaints was 184%. Whereas the cases of rape and sexual assault complaints decreased more in red zones, due to less public movement.

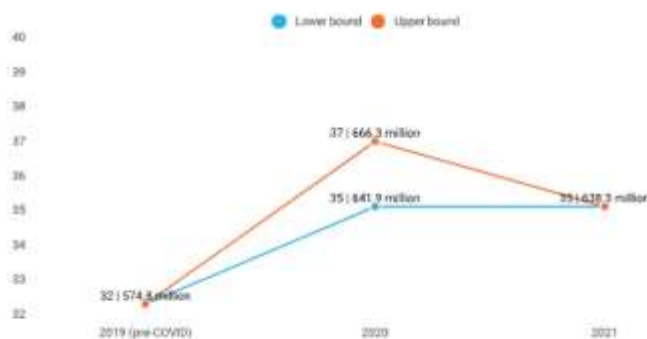
On the other hand, some positive consequences have been seen like women have been helped by their husbands and other male members of the family. Families have witnessed a better bond of companionship among their male and female members. Respect for unpaid household work of women has also emerged.

- **Children**

In 2020, it was estimated that this global crisis of covid-19 could push 142 million more children into economic poor households around the world, especially in developing countries. Year 2021 indicated a slight recovery, with about an additional 60 million children in monetary poor households as compared to 2019.

An additional 60 million children in developing countries are projected to be in households living below the poverty line

Prevalence and number of children living in monetary-poor households, 2019 – 2021 (projected)



Source: Children in Monetary Poor Households and COVID-19, Projections as of December 2021.

Pandemic has been critical times for everyone, especially for infants, young children, and women. According to a World Bank report, lockdown has displaced about 40 million footloose labours in India, putting their families at risk of food scarcity, poverty, malnutrition, and mortality.

As the school is said to miniature of the society, due to pandemic students are not able to learn the hidden curriculum of learning values of togetherness, fraternity and sharing of the school and always sitting in front of the laptop or smartphones to take up their online classes. It also hinders in the development of their academic skills.

On the other side, due to urban to rural migration, a section of children learnt about their traditions and cultures. A strong value system developed because of the time that they spend with their grandparents or elderly people of the family. Their understanding of rural society could develop which otherwise they just read in their books.

- **Migrant Workers**

Actually, migrant workers were one of the worst affected groups since the beginning of the pandemic. They died due to several reasons ranging from starvation, suicides, road and rail accidents, police brutality, exhaustion and refutation of medical treatments.

Not just economic crisis, they also have been encountering various socio-psychological issues like high level of anxieties and fears etc. No transport and shelter facilities were available to them during the lockdown which actually caused a lot of loss to the footloose labor during the reverse migration. Also, this was one of the reasons due to which the lockdown in India could not prosper as per the expectation and the adverse effect it had on the migrant population, majorly the inter-state migrants. About 60.70 lakh additional persons got covered during this time of covid-19 who were earlier working outside their states.

But during the second wave, when lockdown was more state-wise, their condition was better as the factories and essential workplaces were open with precautions. Apart from distribution of free food-grains under The AtmaNirbhar Bharat Scheme (ANBS), some of the States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur and others have also issued new ration cards after March, 2020 to beneficiaries. This has also made a change in their value system i.e. more preference to permanent and settled work. There are many people who were earlier migrant laborers but after the lockdown have decided to stay in their villages back and do the available works.

- **Minorities**

Since the beginning of covid times, minorities are on the front lines with high risk and low-paid jobs like cleaning, transport and many other services which leave them more exposed to COVID-19. Lately, it has been noticed that disproportionate numbers of essential workers are either migrants or persons belonging to minorities and that most of these workers, despite being “essential”, are mostly very poorly paid. Minority women have also gone through a tough time due to covid-19 and had to face lots of hardships and become vulnerable. Quite a number of these minority women work in informal sector which fail to provide health coverage or paid leave.

Basic information on prevention and cure of COVID-19 and availability of health services, economic and social relief not already available in minority languages. The needs of members of these communities are not sufficiently understood and addressed because they are not fully integrated into the process of policy making.

Conclusion:-

Covid-19 has not ended yet, again the waves keep emerging and we need to learn from our past situations. There has already been a lot of turmoil within the global community due to this pandemic. In order to maintain the equilibrium of the society and to save the whole mankind we need to remember that subaltern section is nothing but an important part of the society. Many studies have reported, that it is this section of the society which was actually working as frontline workers, they were not privilege enough to sit and do work from home. **Albert Camus (1991: 150)** stated in the last chapter of his novel *The Plague*: ‘and to state quite simply what we learn in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in [people] than to despise’.

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