

# India's Role as Welfare State During the Covid-19 Pandemic - A Critical Evaluation from Socio-Economic Perspective with Reference to Legal Framework

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## ABSTRACT

In India, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the centre stage the persistent poverty and inequality from which the nation suffers, where more than 21.9% of the population lives below the poverty line. The implementation of nationwide lockdown measures resulted in factories to shut down and interrupted supply chains, rendering migrants and non-migrant employees jobless. With no definite source of income and information on the pandemic teeming in from every direction, these unfortunate poor citizens have turned to their government for streamlined and authentic information, guidance and relief. Based on exploratory study this research highlights the Indian government's policy and measures taken in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the succeeding nationwide lockdown emphasising on key areas with reference to the legal framework .

Keywords : Welfare State , Covid-19 pandemic , Government

## 1. Introduction:

“Capitalism fails to realize that life is social. Communism fails to realize that life is personal.

The good and just society is a socially conscious democracy which reconciles the truths of individualism and collectivism.”  
.....Martin Luther King.

Socialistic democracy or democratic socialism is nothing distant in the time immemorial – it is a political philosophy which promotes the political democracy within a socialistic economy, with a particular emphasis on economic democracy, workplace democracy and workers’ self-management within a market socialist economy or an alternative form of decentralized planned socialist economy.<sup>1</sup>

India has also witnessing the same thing; from its root India is a strong believer of “*sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic*”<sup>2</sup> ideologies while the ‘democratic socialism’ is only a product of 42<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Amendment in India which is amended due to the earnest voice of Avadi Session<sup>3</sup> by adding ‘Socialist’<sup>4</sup> term in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution to further remember that socialism is based here only on the idea of a welfare state which would enhances the free competition, provides a decent standard of life to the working class of people and especially furnishes security from cradle to grave.<sup>5</sup> As a mark of socialism here we notice collective or governmental ownership and control over the total production-distribution of goods and services where governments frequently intermediate in or substitute for markets in some time. It believes that every form of inequalities in income and status should be removed with the note to provide adequate standards of living to the poor and to protect the interests of the weaker sections of the society and to assimilate all the sections of society in a secular integrated socialist *Bharat*, with dignity of person and equality of status to all.<sup>6</sup> So, in brief India is adherent to the noble principles of *justice, equality, equal opportunity, liberty of thought, expression, and fraternity with the very concept of unity and integrity*<sup>7</sup> since its inception. Now if it is the prospect of India, then - is there anyone who can answer that why have we allowed our country and its society to fall prey to the monster of corruption, oppression, inequality and poverty? Why haven’t we stopped the defiling of the Constitution by the people who are supposed to be the custodians of the very document? Why have we still allowed our child to die in malnutrition or play with their tendering age in the factory

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<sup>1</sup>Democratic Socialism, available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic\\_socialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_socialism) (last visited on May 24, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Preamble of The Constitution of India.

<sup>3</sup>Avadi Session of The Indian National Congress, 1955: “In order to realize the object of Congress and to further the objectives stated in the Preamble and directive principles of state policy of the Constitution of India, planning should take place with a view to the establishment of socialistic pattern of society where the principal means of production are under social ownership or control, production is progressively speeded up and there is equitable distribution of the national wealth.” (pg. 46 of Mamta Rao’s Constitutional Law, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2021, Eastern Book Company Pvt. Ltd., Lucknow.)

<sup>4</sup> The Constitution (42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment) Act, 1976.

<sup>5</sup>D.S.Nakara v. Union of India, (1983) 1 SCC 305.

<sup>6</sup>Samatha v. State of A.P. (1997) 8 SCC 191.

<sup>7</sup>Preamble of The Constitution of India.

as a child labour? Why haven't we stopped to witnessing a woman to subordinated, degraded, battered and trafficked in daily basis? Why have we messed our educational systems and using technology in harnessing to profit rather than to solve a problem? Why have we still cultivated the class exploitation and racial discrimination in our governance policy implementation? Why have we persist the terribly inadequate and unequal health care of the poorer sections of the society at the costs of socio-economic justice etc. – all are the concern of the author as it occurred in the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's India. And, it is the high time to raise these questions again as the yearlong pandemic and its naked exposal of inequality and vulnerability clearly revives the age-old issues of have and have not community. But before representing the current scenario, brief concept of welfare state and analysis of some historical context in the light of which the present mixed economy creates must be discuss.

## **2. Concept of Welfare State and its Salient Features**

A welfare state, an essential institution of the modern society, literally means a state/ government primarily aims at the welfare of the people, emanated first in Western Europe as a basic pillar of social protection around 1900; later on the broad range of social risks-services coverage ensured to wider population while the term modern welfare state coined in early 1940, successively flourish during 1950s to 1970s with the further assurance of compensation within the reach of all and tax reduction. Since the 1980s, world noticed the boom of 'welfare state' in industrialized countries and in former communist country by following the transition to market economy. But what is a welfare state? – not clearly portrait anywhere, usually 'welfare' implies several modes of aid provided to the people in terms of money or services like cash payments, subsidies, concessions, grants, public distribution etc. and all these welfare measures in a nutshell - approach towards the redistribution of governmental revenue to the needy. So in this regard, historian Asa Briggs define it as - "A welfare state is a state in which organized power is deliberately used (through politics and administration) in an effort to modify the play of the market forces in at least three directions- first, by guaranteeing individuals and families a *minimum income irrespective of the market value* of their work or their property; second, by *narrowing the extent of insecurity* by enabling individuals and families to meet certain "social contingencies" (for example, sickness, old age and unemployment) which lead otherwise to individual and family crisis; and third, by ensuring that all citizens without distinction of status or class are offered the *best standards available* in relation to a certain agreed range of *social services*." (Briggs, 1961) so, welfare state is nothing but a

modification of impact of the market, it assures some sort of minimum guarantee to alleviate poverty, covers a wider extent of social risks security and furnishes such a services of health care, child and elder care at the best standards available. It has the basic obligation to eliminate every form of economic inequalities from the society and to ensure an equitable standard of living to all citizens of the state. Now the salient features of a welfare state are discussing below to further highlight its efficacy:

1. First it include social security within its paradigm i.e. whenever any welfare state economy is there even if we found a mixed textures of capitalistic and socialistic features exist, generally the government plays a pervasive role in controlling the economic activities and social welfare of the people as well.
2. Second as it is based up on the principles of equality and equal opportunity of all, it is basically socialistic in nature. It also successively upheld equitable distribution of wealth in a society.
3. Third it believes on nationalization instead of privatization as the welfare state has enormous power to control all the economic activities includes the affairs of private enterprises also.
4. Fourth it has a wider extent of welfare mechanism which is always available to each and every individual. As a welfare government it is always keen to provide all the economic and social services to its people as the basic education, public health, housing, other financial assistance like cash payment, grant, public distribution schemes etc.
5. Next it has several undertaking of ownership and operation of industrial enterprises, business and other commercial activities in the name of welfare governments.
6. It guarantees justice to all in a large scale at the time of dealing of common man with the several authorities for their need such as dealing with the administrative officers, controlling officers, sanctioning authorities, officers of social services, etc.
7. It is also planned to formulate national policies to act balanced way in every economic activity. And in this regard the industrial policy, trade policy, commercial and banking policy, disaster management policy etc. is very significant.
8. Another name of the welfare state denotes welfare of labourers, so, at the outset they also enacted several legislations to prevent labour issues, their exploitation in work field and ensure safety – security of all the labourers in industrial enterprises, factories or other sectors of employment.

So to the greater extent welfarism is reflected in our democracies and it functions as a protector, caregiver, dispenser of social services, economic controller and an arbitrator.

### **3. Evolution of India as Welfare State:**

A country whether it is a socialistic one or not, fostering welfare design or not – all those ideal can be achieved if condition of the social organization permit the authorities to adopt the necessary measures to secure the ideologies. Hence in the discussion of India's socialistic attitude - its prior social framework should be demonstrated first. India, by its nature possess a complex demography, between 70 to 80 percent of its people live in or are attached to small towns and villages, where economic activity means only the agriculture, illiteracy is famous but unevenly spread, approximately 80 percent Hindu and 14 percent of Muslim while some other large population groups of Christians, Buddhists, tribalists and other sects noticed – in short, diversity exists with a complex system of castes. Its passion for progress and development with the ideals of closed and protectionist, socialistic, state-run economy, welfarism is very famous over the decades. In India welfarism begins first in ancient time with the philosophy of 'Dana', 'Dharma' or 'Dhamma'; From Ancient India history one can learn about astonishing paradigms of philosophy and practice of "social welfarism". Lord Buddha showed how 'the moral life and the acquisition of wealth can go together' (Kalupahana 1995a: 122). the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna<sup>15</sup> (circa 150 - 250 CE) in his advice to the Satavahana dynasty enjoins the monarch to actively support the work of doctors, set up hostels and rest houses etc. (Mishra 2005). At the time of the Asokan Empire Buddhism was not just a religious belief system but also 'a social and intellectual movement influencing many aspects of social life' (Thapar 2002: 200). The meaning and significance of Buddhist social and political philosophy is best revealed in the Asokan practice of statecraft which incorporated Buddhist ideals of governance in the pursuit of social justice and peace. The key features of state policy developed and practiced in Asokan times comprised 'a system of public morality and social welfare [based on] a sophisticated radical analysis of the human situation' (Ling 1973: 166). During that period activities of the nature of "social welfarism" like organising group of volunteers called "Gopus" for social welfare work, planting of trees along the roads, digging wells, building rest houses for travelers, hospitals for the sick, etc. were in practice under state patronage. In this connection even scholar like Max Weber had to admit that this was the First time in the Hindu culture ... there appeared the idea of the 'welfare state' of the 'general good' (the promotion of which Asoka regarded as the duty of the king). 'Welfare' ... was understood to mean spiritual welfare ... but also rational and economic action'

(Weber as quoted in Jayasuriya, 2008)

In medieval times it was associated with "LokaSreya", "Lok Sangraha", or "Sarvodaya". During the Moghul period it was known as – "Khairat" (meaning giving alms). Then during the rule of Khalifs, Tughlaks, Shersha, Akbar, Chalukyas, Cholas, Mauryas, and especially the golden age of Guptas and

Vikramaditya was notable in regard of the socialistic welfarism contribution. Thereafter when the Britishers intruded into India as a trader and later on started to rule over the territory – they were not at all concerned about welfarism of Indians, rather focused on improvement of their trade and expansion of power. And, eventually the then political scenario of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was such which leave enough scope for the creation of first socio-religious welfare approach over the territory of India. In accordance several new movements accomplished, such as Swami Dayanand Saraswati's movement against "caste" discrimination, prohibition of child marriage, restrictions on widow's remarriage by reviving the Vedic religion and the Indian cultural tradition; Krishna Gokahle's movement for promotion of voluntary services by workers for the various welfare activities etc. Although the Britishers primarily intend something different but many a time their government policy was in favour of public safety, health and morality, labour welfare, trade, business and education and the best example of it was the enactment of first social security legislation in India i.e. The Workmen Compensation Act, 1923. Thereafter a number of piece of social legislation resultant as it includes: the Provident Fund Act of 1925, the Hindu Inheritance (Removal of Disabilities) Act of 1928, the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act of 1937, the Coal Mines Labor Welfare Fund of 1944 etc. Later on the subsequent socio-political mass movement getting forefront of national politics by the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi who asked for the liberation of India from the British rule, liberation of women and the "depressed castes"<sup>8</sup>; he also lifted the ban on women's participation in assembly of the Congress party, helped women to raise their voice against all form of suppression, degradation and harassment. He himself keenly interested to the removal of untouchability of all depressed classes as the then society was demarcated by the "Indo-Aryan" caste system, rightly named as: Brahmanas, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas, Sudras. Consequently some other new social policies also invented during the British era in regard of removal of all form of diswelfare from the society, such as – malpractices in realm of marriage, inheritance, women's socio-political participation, racial discrimination and nuisance of caste categorization.

But active pursuit of public welfare generally followed in modern political and social philosophy when India gets its independence. Immediately in 1947 when India's independence followed by the partition of India, the Indian government eager to enacted a series of new social welfare laws like - the Industrial Disputes act of 1948, Coal Mines Labor Welfare Fund Act of 1947, the Factories Act of 1948, the Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act of 1948, the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, the Coal Mines Provident Fund, Family Pension and Bonus Scheme Act of 1948, the Employees State Insurance Act of

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<sup>8</sup> "Depressed castes" includes the scheduled classes, other backward classes and members of tribal communities.

1948, the Industrial Disputes Banking and Insurance Company Act of 1949, the Employees Provident Fund Ordinance of 1951, the Employees Provident Fund Act of 1952 etc. Next in furtherance, the evolution of the Constitution of India in 1950 heralds a new beginning of socio-economic-political welfarism. Its Preamble at the prior mentions the source of Indian Constitution is “*We, the people of India*” i.e. the ultimate sovereignty of India rests in the people (includes all people of different race, sex, status) themselves<sup>9</sup> and construct India as a “*Democratic, Republic*” one in order to secure and tries to establish all forms of “*Justice – social, economic and political, liberty of thought, expression, equality of status and of opportunity and fraternity ensuring the unity and integrity*” for all the mass. The contribution of Part III i.e. “Fundamental Rights” is also significant; it enlisted and guaranteed a bundle of rights of an individual to ensure democratic welfarism, such as – right to life, right to life with human dignity, right to shelter, right to health etc. (Art.21); right to treat equally to all and equal protection of laws (Article 14); right not to be discriminate only on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth etc.(Article 15); right to equal opportunity of all in “matters relating to employment or appointment i.e. it applies not only in the prior or initial employment, but also includes subsequent promotions, termination of service, abolition of post, salary, periodical increments, fixation of seniority, leave, maternity leave, gratuity, pension, age of superannuation, compulsory retirement etc.; right to free speech, to assemble peaceably, to form and join associations or unions also secured under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution; right to education (Article 21A); right against all forms of exploitation, such as – forced labour, bonded labour, child labour, human trafficking etc. (Article 23, 24); right to Constitutional remedies in breach of every violation of Fundamental Rights (Article 32). Later on the framers of the Constitution of India by understanding the then socio-political scenario incorporate several “Directive Principles of State Policy” in Part IV which in furtherance direct the state to make a number of things available to the citizens, such as – secure a social order where justice and welfare of all form can be promote (Article 38); secure the equal right to livelihood for all men and women, secure the common good by nationalization of the ownership and control of the material resources, equal pay for equal work,<sup>10</sup> secure the health and strength of workers and the tender age of their children from all kind of abuse, exploitation and deprivation<sup>11</sup>(Article 39), secure the quality life of all by the right to work, education and public assistance in old age, sickness and disablement (Article 41); secure the just

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<sup>9</sup> Narender Kumar, *Introduction to The Constitutional Law of India*, p 21, Allahabad Law Agency, Faridabad 2<sup>nd</sup>edn., (2019).

<sup>10</sup>Randhir Singh vs. Union of India, AIR 1982 SC 879

<sup>11</sup> M. C. Mehta vs. State of Tamil Nadu, (1991) 1 SCC 283

and human condition of work <sup>12</sup>and maternity relief (Article 42); secure a minimum wage, a living wage<sup>13</sup> to all workers (including the migrant workers, gig workers etc.) in agricultural, industrial or other sector (Article 43); secure the participation of every workers in management of industries<sup>14</sup>etc.(Article 43A); secure the worker's health, level of nutrition, standard of living etc. as the paramount consideration of a State and it is the duty of the State to protect it (Article 47) as the Directive Principles of State Policy.

In matters of constitutional ideologies, its all set for the promotion of all form of welfarism in India, but in reality the equation was somewhat different; annual growth of the country ranged between 1 to 4 percent for the period of 1947 to 1995 and the cause was – India's population explosion, weak socialist, state-planned economy etc. In 1990, India's low-growth, protectionist economic model was encountered financial realities of a growing, competitive world and consequently forced to introduce comprehensive economic reforms in 1991 by the Liberalization, Privatization and globalization policy i.e. opening India to the world at large, disinvestment of government assets, tax reforms, modernization of infrastructure, land reform, energy policy improvement etc. to restore its creditworthiness before the world. Although these reforms were more difficult due to opposition of India's paternalistic elite and its socialist national bureaucracy, yet it in long run intruded its long standing growth barrier in 2003 and sustains the GDP growth of 5 percent. This reforms also welcome the foreign direct investment (FDI) in India, large US tech companies explored its business over India, nationwide mobile telecom coverage was achieved (2006-2009), transformation of public and business attitude noticed by ease of internet accessibility and acceleration of electronic money transfers (in Modi Government, 2014). Modiji also introduced his "Make in India" vision to boost domestic manufacturing and jobs, "smart city" creates with the extent of highways and improvement-development of rural roads, solar energy was made a priority, improved food self-sufficiency promotes to remove the prospect of starvation. <sup>15</sup>But that is the half-truth where India's emerging market economy makes India a leading nation in the world; and, in other part, it was the same period while India faces financial crisis, lifts tens of millions towards poverty, depression as within these period neo-colonialism entered into India with the new face of Multinational companies and

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<sup>12</sup> Occupational Health and Safety Association vs. Union of India, AIR 2014 SC 1469

<sup>13</sup>Bijay Cotton Mill Ltd. vs. State of Ajmer, AIR 1955 SC 33 – fixation of minimum wage in general interest is not violative of Article 43.

<sup>14</sup>Mumbai Kamgar Sabha v. Abdul Bhai, AIR 1976 SC 1455, National Textile Workers' Union v. P.R. Ramakrishnan, AIR 1983 SC 75.

<sup>15</sup> "India's Long Struggle with Socialism" By David C. Mulford, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, Hoover Institution, available on: prosperityproject\_mulford\_updated.pdf.(last visited on May 25, 2022).

its wide spread economic-political policies of influencing developing countries.<sup>16</sup> So, quite naturally the gap of Modi's vision and his Government's inability in implementation policy becomes widening and as growth declined so did the new domestic and foreign investment with the less job opportunity for country's youth. In short, the socialist interventionist policies reverted which is in further restricted by the challenge of Covid-19 pandemic and its yearlong socio-economic-physical-mental agony. And, that is the urgency to address this issue with great energy and positive vibes of effective implementation.

#### **4. Covid-19 Pandemic and India's Role as Welfare State:**

It was the awakening of 2020 - when again a new page of India and India's welfarism startle by the well disseminate eerie virus caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2), named as Covid 19 or Corona virus, identified first in Wuhan, China, later on sparked into other portion of the world and India was not an exception to it. The first Covid-19 affected case was described on 30 January 2020, in Thrissur, Kerala in a returnee from Wuhan.<sup>17</sup> Later on it increased exponentially and centered in the south of India (including Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu). Until 6 October 2020, WHO declared the record number of Covid-19 cases in India i.e. over 6.6 million according to official figures which represented the second highest accretive number of total cases worldwide after the United States.<sup>18</sup> India also had the record of third-highest number of Covid-19-related fatalities (over 103,000 deaths officially recorded) after the US and Brazil, despite a relatively low case-fatality ratio.<sup>19</sup> Over and all it led to a dramatic loss of human life, raised an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems, shelter, education and the world of work. And, that was the first time while the People of India experienced social distancing and the voluntary public curfew norms under the existing Epidemic Diseases Act 1897 on 11 March 2020. However, quarantine enforcement under Sections 188, 269, 270, and 271 of the Indian Penal Code 1860, and Section 133 of the Criminal

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<sup>16</sup>Alisha Oli Mohammed "Is India still a 'Secular Socialist Democratic Republic'?" - Peace Activist Arundhati Roy's view of Contemporary India", available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alisha-Mohammed/publication/343222605\\_Is\\_India\\_still\\_a\\_%27Secular\\_Socialist\\_Democratic\\_Republic%27\\_-\\_Peace\\_Activist\\_Arundhati\\_Roy%27s\\_view\\_of\\_Contemporary\\_India/links/5f1d9f99299bf1720d65eb79/Is-India-still-a-Secular-Socialist-Democratic-Republic-Peace-Activist-Arundhati-Roys-view-of-Contemporary-India.pdf?origin=publication\\_detail](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alisha-Mohammed/publication/343222605_Is_India_still_a_%27Secular_Socialist_Democratic_Republic%27_-_Peace_Activist_Arundhati_Roy%27s_view_of_Contemporary_India/links/5f1d9f99299bf1720d65eb79/Is-India-still-a-Secular-Socialist-Democratic-Republic-Peace-Activist-Arundhati-Roys-view-of-Contemporary-India.pdf?origin=publication_detail). (last visited on May 20, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> Mukesh Rawat, March 12, 2020 "*Coronavirus in India: Tracking country's first 50 COVID-19 cases; what numbers tell*", available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/coronavirus-in-india-tracking-country-s-first-50-covid-19-cases-what-numbers-tell-1654468-2020-03-12> (last visited on May 19, 2022).

<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization, "*Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) Dashboard*" of 2020, available at: <https://covid19.who.int/region/searo/country/in> (last visited on May 20, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> Government of India (GOI), 2020, "*#India Fights Corona Covid-19*", available at: <https://www.mygov.in/covid-19>, Johns Hopkins University, 2020, "*Mortality Analysis*", available at: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality> (last visited on May 21, 2022).

Procedure Code 1973 quickly came under scrutiny. Later on finally lockdown (the announcement of lockdown occurred one day after the Ministry of Home Affairs invoked Section 6 (2) (i) of the National Disaster Management Act, 2005) proceeded by an announcement of Indian Prime Minister on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 while India had only 500 confirmed Covid-19 cases and fewer than 10 deaths.<sup>20</sup> But such an announcement declared with the further order directing all state and union territories to implement stringent measures regarding complete lockdown which in furtherance resulted closure of all offices, factories, and shops, except those considered as providing essential goods and services.<sup>21</sup> And, the devastating part of it was the economic and social disruption of the community while millions falls into extreme poverty, faced the challenge of lack of food, water and daily products, loss of income, lack of communication, damage in production, shrinking of economic markets – all together the era of pandemic<sup>22</sup> begins. And it impaired most to the millions of low-income migrant workers and daily-wage earners who had to adjust their life with no savings, no food, and no shelter and interestingly Govt.’s unplanned sudden lockdown and closure of every means of communication forced them to walk hundreds of miles to reach their native villages which in furtherance created exodus of millions over the raj path; their tragedy yet remained to happen - they crossed several thousand kilometers with starvation, exhaustion and due to this many died on the road and train accident, many suffer police brutality, many faced denial of medical care in Govt.’s set up quarantine centers due to overcrowding and unhealthy facilities, many faces deprivation from their allotted rations, basic amenities, even they didn’t receive any Govt. proposed allowances also - in absence of systemized registration process. Apart from the unorganized sector, it has also sparked fears of an impending economic crisis and recession in organized sectors also. People started to follow social distancing, staying at home and travel restrictions which in furtherance lead to reduced workforce in all kind of economic sector and resultant to loss of many jobs in entirety. Eventually all schools were closed down, the basic needs of commodities and manufactured products has decreased. Altogether it has sparked globally an uncertain panic – we witnessed panic-buying and stockpiling of food products, medical services etc. which in a nutshell increased the demand of the product and then people forced to buy the products on high price.

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<sup>20</sup>Ipchita Bharali, Preeti Kumar, Sakthivel Selvaraj “*How Well is India Responding to Covid 19*”, July 2, 2020, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2020/07/02/how-well-is-india-responding-to-covid-19/> (last visited on May 18, 2022).

<sup>21</sup>Stefan Kühner Keerty Nakray Daniel Neff “*India’s Social Policy Response to Covid-19: Temporary Relief in a Rigid Welfare Landscape*”, available at: <https://www.socialpolicydynamics.de/f/e7ca918b3d.pdf> (last visited on May 18, 2022)

<sup>22</sup> On 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 - WHO (World Health Organisation) declared Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) as a Pandemic.

So, the tricky Pandemic Covid-19 has numerous impacts in worldwide, especially, its reaches its heights in education, health and Indian organized sector which must be addressed in reference to this study.

#### **4.1. Impact on Education Sector**

Covid- 19 and its aftermath not only led to an economic crisis globally, it also remembered in the disruption of teaching-learning process on as unprecedented scale from pre-school to tertiary education. Different countries have introduced various policies, starting from complete closure to targeted closure of all the schools, colleges, universities etc. In India also all educational institutions were temporarily closed in March, 2020 as their academic year of 2019-20 completed its session. A new school year was yet to begin from the month of May but it couldn't resume its journey in amid pandemic. Notably in April, 2020 the Ministry of Human Resource Development (renamed the Ministry of Education from July 2020 after the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was published) published and presented an Alternative Academic Calendar (AAC) guidelines in order to continue the formal education in an online mode. And, accordingly a lot of digital content, resources are generated, free access of digital library promoted, number of easy online study materials transmitted to help children continue to learn from home. However this positive educational approach somehow faded while a 2019 report<sup>23</sup> published; it found vast inequalities in the capacity of teachers, learning outcomes, Govt. promoted digital infrastructure and access of technology – it shows us that only 32 percent of the rural population of 12+ years and 54 percent of urban population had internet access and that only 11 percent of Indian households have computers such as desktops, laptops and tablets (excluding smart phones). On the other hand the report of National Assessment Survey shows us that continuous education in an online mode become a problematic one for 38% students; 80% student said in learning purpose - school is far better than the online education; even 24% students of India deprived i.e. didn't get any phone or computer for their basic online education. This report also highlighted students' low rate of performance mainly in the subjects of math and science as - learning language like Bengali, English in online mode is comparatively easy than to learn math and science.<sup>24</sup> Another study<sup>25</sup> report indicated that children who studied in the Government schools were hit hard in comparison to private schools as more than 80 percent of govt. schools' students in several states like Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttar

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<sup>23</sup> Nielsen & Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), “*Digital in India: 2019 – Round 2 Report*”, available at: <https://cms.iamai.in/Content/researchpapers/2286f4d7-424f-4bde-be88-6415fe5021d5.pdf> (last visited on May 20, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> Correspondent Reporter “24% school students have no mobile phone and computer” *Anandabazar Patrika*, May 29, 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Oxfam India, Status Report: “*Government and Private Schools during COVID-19*”, 4 September 2020. 1,158 parents across private and government schools and 488 government schoolteachers across five states – Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh participated in the Oxfam India study.

Pradesh etc. not receiving any educational materials during the lockdown. And this unavailability of textbooks to support the online education becoming a major challenge in India where only 15% of India's rural households have access to the internet and this numbers decreased among marginalised social groups<sup>26</sup> such as Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims, as per government data. So majority is lacking the digital access in absence of digital devices and e-learning tools and most notably Whatsapp was the primary medium (75 percent) for delivering lectures, forwarding study notes followed by phone calls between teachers-students (38 percent). Many a time whatsapp lessons also become a troublesome as because of the lack of an internet connection or the inability to afford it, or because of poor internet speed/signal. Even gendered access of digital mediums also practiced in India which in furtherance excludes many a girls' option of education during lockdown.<sup>27</sup> Lockdown also posed a challenge like expected rise in dropouts in public and private schools in all over India. But more or less the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating impact mostly felt upon the students of vulnerable community whereas the students from privileged backgrounds could access the alternative learning opportunities through Byjus like company or through some language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools or online learning software tools. Especially Byjus, Bengaluru based one of India's largest tech unicorns found in 2011 became the world's biggest ed-tech company during the Covid-19 pandemic by acquisition of WhiteHat Jr in August 2020 in exchange of \$300 million and the \$150 million Toppr deal in July 2021.<sup>28</sup> Since the announcement of free live classes on its Think & Learn App, Byjus had seen a 200% increase in the number of new students<sup>29</sup> using its product according to Mrinal Mohit, the Company's Chief Operating Officer – which automatically helped edtech company Byjus' to become a decacorn and cross \$10.5 billion valuation during pandemic. Being the learning App, it progressed in past ages but now it wants to empower children monetarily by the dream of coding skill - an edtech giant's dizzying rise is there; many a time the sales representative of Byjus asked difficult questions to the targeted children which he couldn't answer – which in furtherance compelled the demotivated parent to get admitted their child in Byjus. But when they were not satisfied by Byjus's service – there was no

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<sup>26</sup> Aastha Malik, “*Indian public schools failed to provide education during lockdown, say 80% parents in a new survey*”, available at: <https://scroll.in/article/973138/indian-public-schools-failed-to-provide-education-during-lockdown-say-80-parents-in-a-new-survey> (last visited on May 18, 2022).

<sup>27</sup> UNESCO, “*India Case Study*”, October, 2021, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/16511/file/India%20Case%20Study.pdf> (last visited on May 20, 2022).

<sup>28</sup> Ananya Bhattacharya, “*How Byju's became the world's biggest ed-tech company during the Covid-19 pandemic*”, available at: <https://scroll.in/article/1004404/how-byjus-became-the-worlds-biggest-ed-tech-company-during-the-covid-19-pandemic> (last visited on May 18, 2022).

<sup>29</sup> Cathy Li, Farah Lalani, “*The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever. This is how*”, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/> (last visited on May 21, 2022).

chance to revert back i.e. in any how the parents has to pay the whole proposed amount, often they misled by sales agents, even refund of deposited amount although promised yet not provided.<sup>30</sup> And how this agents work under Byjus in an extreme pressure – that is also available in YouTube. In one words, the future of education and educational development are threatened during pandemic in one hand by the mafia raj of Byjus and alike Co. & in the other hand by the interrupted conventional schooling system which created loss of habit of learning directed by loss of skill which in furtherance create loss of a child's productivity or in a greater interest – the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) could be 1.5% lower on average for the remainder of century.

## **4.2. Impact on Health sector**

COVID -19 or the novel coronavirus of 2019, popularly known as a fearsome health calamity, later on declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 and global pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>31</sup> – undoubtedly heralded a new devastating era with its ease of spread by infected droplets and through inhalation, caused several cases and deaths, surely has a robust impact on health sector in worldwide includes India which need to be addressed at the outset. This disease has an incubation period from two to fourteen days but generally remains asymptomatic. If symptomatic, mostly the symptoms observed are – fever, dry cough, breathing issue, weakness i.e. restlessness and in some time it leads to acute respiratory distress syndrome and pneumonia which can end up in numerous organ failure and finally caused death. These health complications were more rampant in elderly, young children and in patients with pre-existing co-morbidities.<sup>32</sup> India reported its first COVID-19 positive case on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020, and then the number of such cases was crossed 300 marks<sup>33</sup> in less than three weeks and its unbridled nature easily followed by detection of 50 or more cases in each day. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020 when the Central Government announced a one day “janta Curfew”<sup>34</sup> it showed a single day decline of cases but till 24<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Nikhil Inamdar, “Byju’s and the other side of an edtech giant’s dizzying rise”, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2021, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-58951449> (last visited on May 17, 2022).

<sup>31</sup> COVID – 19 Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) Global research and innovation forum, available at: [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-public-health-emergency-of-international-concern-\(pheic\)-global-research-and-innovation-forum](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-public-health-emergency-of-international-concern-(pheic)-global-research-and-innovation-forum) (last visited on June 3, 2022).

<sup>32</sup> Liu K, Chen Y, Lin R, Han K. Clinical features of COVID-19 in elderly patients: a comparison with young and middle-aged patients, available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7102640/> J Infect. 2020;80(6):14-8 (last visited on June 4, 2022).

<sup>33</sup> Gupta R, Pal SK. Trend Analysis and forecasting of COVID-19 outbreak in India. medRxiv. 2020, available at: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.26.20044511v1.full.pdf> (last visited on June 3, 2022).

<sup>34</sup> Chandna H, Basu M. Modi announces ‘Janata Curfew’ on 22 March, urges for resolve, restraint to fight coronavirus. The Print. 2020 Mar 19, available at: <https://theprint.in/india/modi-announces-janata-curfew-on-22-march-urges-for-resolve-restraint-to-fight-coronavirus/384138/> (last visited on June 2, 2022).

March, 2020 when the country's Prime Minister announced a 21 day countrywide lockdown, the data shows us 536 people had tested positive and 10 deaths reported. Correspondingly such measures like – isolation, social distancing, use of mask and sanitizer, quarantine of suspects, stringent infection management actions etc. were adopted to prevent Covid-19. And as of the matter relating to “health”<sup>35</sup> comes under State Governments in India, it administer the healthcare system at both – private and public levels. The primary health care is the concern of the public system whereas secondary, tertiary and quaternary services are provided more in private setups. But one thing was the challenge in both the sector i.e. the cost pressure; otherwise the private sectors manage the health care service with specialized care and operational expertise by using technology and high-end diagnostics.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly in amid pandemic Covid-19, Indian medical sector reacted and a transient shift to mobile health, telemedicine, online patient registration and digital marketing and service delivery was seen in both the sectors. Even the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) provided a detail guideline for essential Health Service<sup>37</sup> delivery during Covid-19 on April 14, 2020. But that was not the end of it, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare along with NITI Aayog has also rolled out a new guideline to allow the use of technology for all the Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs)<sup>38</sup> to provide healthcare services by minimizing exposure risks. Government in furtherance, in order to address the country's health crisis promoted National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)<sup>39</sup> (also known as Pradhan Mantri Digital Health Mission) on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2020. But the rampant spread of the virus and increasing demand on health facilities raised a question before the State where India ranks 145<sup>th</sup> among 195 countries in quality and accessibility of care and its healthcare infrastructure<sup>40</sup> wherein still India lags behind in average numbers of 0.5 beds for every 1000 patients in India. Thus naturally on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 the Government propelled to introduce financial stimulus packages at 0.8% of GDP for infrastructure development, procuring a great number of testing kits and labs. Later on, in April, 2020 when the rate of infection increased with the lack of lab and beds in Government run quarantine

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<sup>35</sup> Entry 6 of List –II of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.

<sup>36</sup> Shukla D., Pradhan A., Malik P., “Economic impact of COVID-19 on the Indian healthcare sector: an overview” 2020 available at: <https://www.ijcmph.com/index.php/ijcmph/article/view/7339/4604> (last visited on: June 3, 2022).

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt of India. Enabling Delivery of Essential Health Services during the COVID 19 Outbreak Guidance note. New Delhi: MoHFW; 2020 Apr 14, available at: <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/EssentialservicesduringCOVID19updated0411201.pdf> (last visited on June 4, 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Ramanan R., Agarwal N., Agarwal H., “Telemedicine: A Blessing in Disguise” available at: <https://www.niti.gov.in/telemedicine-blessing-disguise> (last visited on: June 3, 2022).

<sup>39</sup> Prime Minister Announces National Digital Health Mission to Ensure Health Services for All, 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2020, available at: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1646461> (last visited on: June 3, 2022).

<sup>40</sup> Shukla D., Pradhan A., Malik P., “Economic impact of COVID-19 on the Indian healthcare sector: an overview” 2020 available at: <https://www.ijcmph.com/index.php/ijcmph/article/view/7339/4604> (last visited on: June 3, 2022).

facilities – Country’s Prime Minister announced 15,000 crore rupees (USD 2 billion) as ‘India Covid-19 Emergency response and health system preparedness package with Rs. 7774 Crores allocated for Emergency response and rest for medium term support under mission mode approach’.<sup>41</sup> But the risk of severe complications from Covid-19 was so high in 2<sup>nd</sup> highest populated country like India that the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) also issued an advisory to insurance companies to include corona virus within their health coverage and to expedite the processing of claims made in relation to Covid-19 Pandemic. And for below poverty line cases, Central Government launched Ayushman Bharat Health Insurance Scheme <sup>42</sup>to cover all vulnerable populations like stranded poor, daily wagers, migrant workers etc. within its ambit.

But that was the half truth about the Covid -19’s impact on health in India – here the response to Covid – 19 has compelled to many patients suffering non covid conditions having to delay their treatment; patients with chronic conditions like – HIV, tuberculosis and those requiring dialysis have been struggling to access treatment as hospitals began restricting their OPDs in response to Covid – 19, even the patients in medical emergencies for whom denial of care is equal to death like in cancer and cardiac arrests reported disregard in covid time; the issue of availability of blood in blood banks for acute/emergency conditions became a challenge with restricted mobility of blood donors.<sup>43</sup> In nutshell, Public Health Emergency felt in real terms with another devastating impact of closure of public transport, restriction of use of private vehicles, non-availability of sufficient care providers etc. – initially its created fear, mistrust, panic and stigmatization which also had a direct impact on one’s mental health condition<sup>44</sup>; later on its also affected our Pharma Industry where India, the biggest producers of generic medications heavily depends on other countries, like – China for its import of active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) declared total ban of Chinese product, goods, services during pandemic. It has two setbacks – first, the principle of move away from China on imports API caused disorder temporarily, but second, in the long run India’s overdependence in China for API’ ended. As of March 2020, India contributes to about 20% to the global generic market. Even the Indian Government

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<sup>41</sup>ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Sharma N. Covid – 19 treatments to be covered under Ayushman Bharat. The Economic Times. 2020, available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/covid-19-treatment-to-be-covered-under-ayushman-bharat/articleshow/74784764.cms> (last visited on: June 4, 2022).

<sup>43</sup>Hebbar P., Sudha A., Dsouza V., Chilgod L., Amin A., Healthcare Delivery in India amid the Covid -19 pandemic: Challenges and opportunities, May, 2020, available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341849313\\_Healthcare\\_Delivery\\_in\\_India\\_amid\\_the\\_Covid-19\\_Pandemic\\_Challenges\\_and\\_Opportunities](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341849313_Healthcare_Delivery_in_India_amid_the_Covid-19_Pandemic_Challenges_and_Opportunities) (last visited on: June 4, 2022).

<sup>44</sup> ibid

has declared a budget of Rs. 10,000 crore to incentivize production of APIs in India<sup>45</sup>. As a result India's development in Pharma Industry followed where Indian Company manufacturing a spectrum of drugs like – Hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malaria drug, Remdesivir, the investigational antiviral drug etc. India's performance in manufacturing vaccines<sup>46</sup> was also noticeable. It not only manufactures vaccine under the national Covid-19 immunization programme but it also exporting them. But whether this much of initiative was enough to tackle the Covid-19 spread!! - a question arose in this juncture about the ongoing crisis, mostly two causes were highlighted: One, the Indian governments mismanaged pandemic response; and second, the existence of big pharma<sup>47</sup>. And, it arose not in vacuum; there were several instances over the last year where our Prime Minister and his organized Government engaged in 'superspreader theatrics'<sup>48</sup> instead of disaster management. When India report its first Covid -19 positive case in Jan, 2020 then he organized gatherings of over one lakh people in Gujarat to welcome the then US President Donald Trump, even in second wave of pandemic he holds political rallies in poll-bound states and allowing Kumbh Mela to taken place instead of strengthening the entire health system. The destructive impact of pandemic was also visible in one hand before the crematoriums where bodies are piling up and mass gathering followed in outside hospitals in almost every city of the country and in other hand while farmer's agitation goes on against Farm Laws & as a Prime Minister he didn't react responsibly and allowed the mass gathering which again caused a threat of Covid-19 spread<sup>49</sup>. And in the opposite site the presence of big pharma who upheld patents on Covid-19 vaccines in U.S. and Europe, create a system of global vaccine apartheid, denied the ability to produce lifesaving vaccines in low and middle income countries – was remarkable in the sense of pandemic profiteers and not as humanitarians. There were several instances where India's own Big Pharma has used the pandemic to strengthen market shares, grow profits and place vaccines unreachable for most people in an unequal country like India. Repeated advertisement shows us that India's own Big Pharma sold their vaccines in the cheapest rate of the world but rate of profits made by these companies tell us Serum's profits was of up to 2,000 percent and Bharat Biotech made up 4,000 percent where in comparison Pfizer and

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<sup>45</sup>Jauhari U., Six Indian drug firms that are doing serious business in coronavirus times, March, 2022, available at: [https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/six-indian-drug-firms-that-are-doing-serious-business-in-coronavirus-times-120071300552\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/six-indian-drug-firms-that-are-doing-serious-business-in-coronavirus-times-120071300552_1.html) (last visited on June 5, 2022).

<sup>46</sup>In this regard, Hyderabad based Bharat Biotech Company's Covaxin and Oxford-Astrazeneca developed Serum Institute of India's manufactured vaccine Covishield was very remarkable.

<sup>47</sup> Gopalan A., "India's vaccine makers are Pandemic Profiteers, not humanitarians", June, 2021, available at: <https://theintercept.com/2021/06/19/india-covid-vaccine-profiteering/> (last visited on June, 2022).

<sup>48</sup>Modi is a 'super spreader' of coronavirus, says IMA vice president, April, 2021, available at: <https://scroll.in/latest/993413/modi-is-a-super-spreader-of-coronavirus-says-ima-vice-president> (last visited on June 6, 2022).

<sup>49</sup> ibid.

Moderna's profit margins were 650 percent and 500 percent respectively<sup>50</sup>. Even the Central Government's inefficiency reflected in dealing with oxygen supply; it allowed India's industrial oxygen exports to rise by over 700 percent<sup>51</sup> instead of redirecting oxygen production to medical needs which caused unsurprisingly countless people's gasped to death. So, one statement is very popular—There is always money to be made in the misery of the many and India's Covid - 19 disasters is no exception of it.

### **4.3. Impact on Indian Employment Sector**

With the calamitous impact upon education and health sector, covid 19 has a deep and pervasive aftereffect on Indian employment sector. But exactly how much impact of current crisis felt on Indian organized and unorganized sector- it's not only difficult to predict its intensity but also hard due to its prolonged duration and its consequent lockdowns. Generally an epidemic in each country has followed three stages – first, it concerned of the emergency itself and people tried to find out the necessary measures to be taken of in prevention of it in the earliest convenience; second, Reactivation proceeds- once the hotspot of the epidemic detected and controlled then only one thing mandated i.e. to “live with” the virus by maintaining some restrictions on economic and social activities, otherwise there is a possibility of further spreads of virus. But what happen in this stage –the economy runs at “half speed” due to the direct impact of epidemic. In the third stage there is no fear of contagion as vaccine exist and a new economic and social reality begins by cumulating of institutional, productive and technological capabilities of the concerning country.<sup>52</sup> In general epidemic has led to the economic crisis both in supply and demand as the social restrictions caused partial suspension of productive activities which interrupt the supply of inputs, both domestic as well as imported. And, on the demand side – a radical change noticed in the form of reduced consumer incomes and uncertainty of life which led to a drop in consumption and a change in consumer pattern. Now alike epidemic, in the matter of economic impact of Pandemic Covid - 19 another thing fire up the crisis in furtherance and i.e. the aversion behaviour of the people Where people themselves are taking to prevent them from being infected with the virus, such as controlled their life with the restricted going out and the government ban introduced on ‘nonessential’ shops, etc. These actions again affect the economic sectors and translate into lower

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<sup>50</sup> Gopalan A., “India's vaccine makers are Pandemic Profiteers, not humanitarians”, June, 2021, available at: <https://theintercept.com/2021/06/19/india-covid-vaccine-profiteering/> (last visited on June, 2022).

<sup>51</sup> Between April 2020 and January 2021, India exported over 9,000 metric tonnes of oxygen, according to a Ministry of Commerce Report.

<sup>52</sup>No. 4, Special Report, Covid-19 response by “Sectors and businesses facing COVID-19: emergency and reactivation”, 2 July, 2020, available at: [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45736/5/S2000437\\_en.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45736/5/S2000437_en.pdf) (Last visited on: 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2022).

incomes, both on the supply side (declining in the production) and in the demand side (reduced consumer demand) followed by the closure of businesses results in no wages for workers in many informal economies. So by nature the impact of Covid -19 pandemic and how harsh it reflected in our society needs to be addressed with the relevancy of rapid assessment of its impact on employment.

Pandemic Covid – 19 or a distant eerie virus in 2020 is nothing new before the world, remembered as a year of unbridled economic downturn, closedown of working industries, school-college-office etc. – briefly generated panic and high crisis in the global market. It triggered outbreak first in Wuhan, China in December, 2019, although in later it sparked into other portions of China, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Nepal, United States, Britain etc. As a pandemic, in large scale its affected every country of the world but every economy in the region was not suffered equally; on the basis of their domestic demand and supply as well as global demand and supply – they experienced diverge consequences. According to the report of ILO, it is estimated that globally more than 25 million jobs are at risk due to COVID-19 outbreak. They (International Labour Organization) describe it in its report as *‘the worst global crisis since World War II’*. It is estimated that four in five people (81%) of the global workforce of 3.3 billion people are currently affected by the lockdowns in various countries. The Head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kristalina Georgieva has said *the world is going through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression in the 1930s*.<sup>53</sup> Now in case of a developing country like India, the impact felt was not same as other developed or developing country as India – unique by its diversity, popular in total number of its population, still count as a ‘developing country’ instead of ‘developed’, experienced slower economic growth, rising unemployment, poverty etc. in prior Covid-19 situation. By following the report of International Monetary Fund (IMF) – Indian economy’s slower growth is nothing strange to us, over the period of 2015 – 2019- growth fell from 8.0 to 4.0 percent; the unemployment rate exceeded 6% in 2018, while the youth unemployment rate touch the hike of 23% from 10% in the duration of 2012 to 2018.<sup>54</sup> With it India’s long term labour market challenge, there is a slow and uncertain structural transformation is very common which India facing continuously. And in case of poor structural transformation, the contribution of hasty implementation of demonetization and fallout of GST is remarkable in India. Due to demonetization, hundreds of millions of small businesses operating in the informal sector that depend on cash have suffered losses and closed. Mostly economic

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53 K Chandra Shekar and Kashif Mansoor, “COVID-19: Lockdown Impact on Informal Sector in India” , October 2020, available at: <https://practiceconnect.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/covid-19-lockdown-impact-on-informal-sector-in-india/> (Last visited on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2022).

54 International Monetary Fund, “World Economic Outlook – The Great Lockdown”, April 2020. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020> (Last visited on: 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2022).

downturn noticed in informal sector and a staggering of 6.18 million job-losses reported between 2012 and 2018.<sup>55</sup> Still, in lack of up-to-date labour force survey data - exact analysis of the trauma of working class yet not possible. And while India succinct with these, the outbreak of Covid -19 pandemic happened in the beginning of 2020. So, naturally pandemic and its crisis dramatically worsened the situation and focusing more on the existing imbalances in the society. In the assessment, the total number of workers almost reaches 364 million or more who touches the vulnerability due to lockdown which includes those in casual work, self-employment and unprotected regular jobs who especially lacking the social protection coverage.<sup>56</sup> According to the ILO report<sup>57</sup>, more than 40 crore informal workers may get pushed into deeper poverty in India due to COVID-19 outbreak and especially the sectors such as hospitality and accommodation, retail and wholesale, business services, construction and industry have suffered drastic consequences with a decrease in production and loss of hours and employment figures. Supply chains have been cut off for more than a weeks as many manufacturing units shut down its productions due to the complete lockdown announced by the Government of India in 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. Small businesses selling textiles, electronics or household goods are stranded. And where the shortage of supplies for ordinary businesses in India faces, it means no business and no income. Often this situation leads to chaos in Indian employment sector and the whole sector be they belong to the organized (formal) or unorganized (informal) - faces numerous taunt in their journey of employment. Although the organized sector balance the awkwardness of time by shifting its employment policy form ‘office job’ to ‘work from home’ job and full salary to half of the salary but the most affected sector was the unorganised sector where not only the workers faces cuts of salary, layoffs, furloughs etc. during the lockdown period even if in post Covid time also their vulnerability remains noticeable. And within these unorganised sectors, how the migrant workers especially, nearly 22% of India’s total population- at the expense of whom several industrial development possible, how they were exposed in the four hours’ short notice of lockdown – that was beyond our imagination. First this Government proposed lockdown closed their only means of employment i.e. industries and all which

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<sup>55</sup>K Chandra Shekar and Kashif Mansoor, “COVID-19: Lockdown Impact on Informal Sector in India”, October 2020, available at: <https://practiceconnect.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/covid-19-lockdown-impact-on-informal-sector-in-india/> (Last visited on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2022).

<sup>56</sup> ILO brief, “*Rapid Assessment of the impact of the Covid – 19 crisis on Employment*”, June, 2020, available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sronew\\_delhi/documents/publication/wcms\\_748095.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sronew_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_748095.pdf) (Last visited on 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2022)

<sup>57</sup>K Chandra Shekar and Kashif Mansoor, “COVID-19: Lockdown Impact on Informal Sector in India”, October 2020, available at: <https://practiceconnect.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/covid-19-lockdown-impact-on-informal-sector-in-india/> (Last visited on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2022).

snatches their daily bread and butter; then they faced deprivation from their employers, lost rented shelters without payment, even non co-operation founded from the site of policy makers, and the cancellation of all trains and public vehicles perfectly exacerbates the existing inequalities and vulnerabilities of the migrant workers in India and compelled them to walk in Rajpath. But their trauma remain unnoticeable up to the period city noticed exodus of million migrant workers in extreme exhaustion, starvation resulted road accident, rail accident, mob lynching, police brutality etc. Their daily challenges were so chaotic that it can easily become the headline of the newspaper during the several phases of lockdown (Phase II, III, and IV). Still they are continuously struggling with their hurdles of life as their victimization still continuing in their native places in lack of adequate Government jobs. Although their deplorable situation somehow managed by several Government proposed relief as the Government of India comes out with numerous stimulus packages, still its adequacy and policy value is under a question. First ahead on lockdown, on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 the Home Ministry ordered the states to use the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) as to ensure that migrants would not move during lockdown<sup>58</sup> and can access adequate food, shelter, medical essentials such as masks, sanitizers, and medicines, sets up several relief camp/centres to comply the basic needs of the migrant workers, provide direction to the landlords that they should not demand rent and employers should pay full wages without deduction on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 for the period of lockdown. In late March, as the train services were cancelled, several state govt. arranged free transport facilities in ease of return of the migrant workers to their native places. However, the central government did not give permission to operate buses up to last week of April. As of 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2020 40 lakh migrants had travelled to their homes by buses. Further, in 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2020 the central government had provided Rs. 11,092 crore to states and Union Territories under the National Disaster Response Fund to manage food and shelter arrangement of migrants. The average daily wages under the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) were also increased Rs. 182 (US\$2.60) to Rs. 202 (US\$2.80) as of 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2020. On 1<sup>st</sup> May, Indian Railways launched “Shramik Special” trains<sup>59</sup> to ply the stranded migrant workers in their native places. And, as of 12<sup>th</sup> June, 4,277 Shramik Special trains had transported about 60 lakh migrant people. Another monetary support of Rs. 3k crore came from the PM CARES Fund<sup>60</sup> for the migrant workers on 13<sup>th</sup> May. In the very next day, on 14<sup>th</sup> May, the Govt.

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<sup>58</sup>"4 crore migrant workers in India; 75 lakh return home so far: MHA". *The Tribune*. 23 May 2020. Retrieved 27 July 2020.

<sup>59</sup>Nandi, Shreya (12 June 2020). "Indian Railways receive request for 63 Shramik Special trains". Livemint. Retrieved 28 July 2020.

<sup>60</sup>Sharma, Akhilesh; Prabhu, Sunil (13 May 2020). "Rs 3,100 Crore From PM CARES Fund Allocated For Ventilators, Migrants". NDTV. Retrieved 29 July 2020.

unveiled second tranche of stimulus package of Rs. 3,500 crore for close to 8 crore migrant workers who are not covered under the food distribution system in absence of ration card, containing – a) free food grains (5kg grains and 1kg chana) to every person per family per month for two months; b) affordable rental housing facility for them under PM-Awas Yojana; c) One Nation One Ration Card to enable access of PDS across the country; d) 14.32 crore person-days of work generated under MGNREGA as of May 13.<sup>61</sup> On 16<sup>th</sup> May, the government announced the National Migrant Information System (NMIS), an online database created by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). This was to streamline the movement of the migrant workers<sup>62</sup> and help states find the current number of stranded migrant workers and their location. As the country noticed heavy movement of migrant workers during mid-May, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had revise its Covid-19 testing strategy to include all returnees and migrants who show symptoms for influenza like illness (ILI) in order to avoid any health hazard of the distressed migrant workers. Testing through the gold standard RT-PCR test was also proposed. The Govt. of India in further advancement of migrant workers launched the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan<sup>63</sup> – a rural public works scheme on the very 20<sup>th</sup> June with an initial funding of Rs. 50,000 crore for 116 districts in 6 states. In this way several Govt. initiative followed but how much it is adequate - present existing scenario is the best reply to it.

From the above discussion it is quite clear “Collectively, the Indian government’s relief measures have not been able to adequately alleviate the Covid-19-related social pressures and risks. While there is still a dearth of adequate statistical data to assess how well the relief measures were implemented, the initial picture suggests that the Indian government’s response to the global Covid-19 pandemic prioritised economic and fiscal measures, relied on the existing inadequate safety net, and was not timely enough to support millions of inter-state migrants. The public health crisis and ensuing nationwide lockdown have not resulted in a path-breaking trajectory away from the entrenched Indian welfare paradigm.”<sup>64</sup>

## **5. Conclusion and Suggestion:**

In conclusion, India’s take as a welfare state on pandemic Covid – 19 and its related crisis is really significant. It’s allowed a new re-alignment in the society with the perspective of neo-welfarism context.

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<sup>61</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> tranche of relief focuses on poor, migrants, farmers. (2020, May 15). *The Times of India*, pp. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Deepthiman Tiwari, “To Streamline movement of migrants, centre launches portal”, *The Indian Express*, May 17, 2020 (Visited on July 29, 2020).

<sup>63</sup> “Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan: PM Modi to launch mega Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan today”. *The Times of India*. 20 June 2020. Retrieved 28 July 2020.

Although Government propositions are always there yet it requires a proper strategy to restore the employment options, more job opportunity and support income of both enterprises and workers. We know the pre – pandemic strata (graph) never returns within a year but much talk about the Government policy actions require in developing country like – India where the socio-economic and health related costs is very high. Still now it taking steps to strengthen the existing health systems and tried to expand its social safety nets, even offer tax relief measures and credit guarantees but where is the relief felt - even the policy makers were also failed to detect the misfortune of mass amid pandemic’s lockdown. And that is the crux of the present study where some suggestive ideas are mentioning below to act efficiently against such health crisis of pandemic Covid-19:

1. Firstly, an effective Government policy required to meet the challenges of India’s present socio-economic disarrayed condition in every field of health, education and employment sector.
2. Secondly, in spite of several Government policies we noticed the low Government expenditure on education which is only 3.5 percent of India’s GDP which at the outset should be increased for the behalf of mass welfare.
3. Thirdly, pandemic again shows us how much endeavor required in the health sector; in built the healthcare industry in India where still among 195 nations, India ranks overall at 66<sup>64</sup> with a score of 42.8 and a decline of 0.8 points since 2019 in the GHS (Global Health Security) index.
4. Next, in the employment sector – the vulnerable community includes the unrecognized migrant population who is still not register themselves under the State, some initiative by the Government in their identification as a “Workers” in the ‘Government Register’ is essential, otherwise, the benefits of Covid-19 stimulus packages faded.
5. Lastly, there are numerous Government proposed beneficial schemes like the stimulus packages and all but it’s the high time to introduce a strong surveillance system to oversee whether it reaches to the needy hands or not.
6. Muhammad, Muhammad Bello, R. A. Aziz, And V. W. C. Yew. "Socio—Economic Effects Of Industrialization In The Society." *Int. J. Environ. Ecol. Fam. Urban. Stud* 8 (2018): 24-29.

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<sup>64</sup>Stefan Kühner, Keerty Nakray, Daniel Neff (2021) ‘‘ India’s Social Policy Response to Covid-19: Temporary Relief in a Rigid Welfare Landscape CRC 1342 Covid-19 Social Policy Response Series, 4 Bremen: CRC 1342,

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