

# Pandemic V/S Politics: Political Aspect Of COVID-19 In India

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**Abstract - Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) that was declared as Pandemic by WHO, does not only affect the medical and health aspect of people but it put a deep effect on the politics either it may be national or international. The breakout of Corona virus has exposed the various abilities and inabilities of Governments to handle with it. It exposed the social relations of people, medical infrastructure and facilities to handle with it, stability of economy, and even the political handouts played by politicians to remain in the power or to get the power. The studies show that most of the political leaders emerged either from the world wars or any pandemic. A US-based survey showed that there is great increase in the popularity of Narendra Modi after the breakout of Corona. Net approval rating of Narendra Modi reaches 68 points up that was 62 at the beginning of the year 2020. As just before the breakout of Corona virus in India PM Narendra Modi was facing serious challenges like Anti government Protest (due to CAB and NPR), Hindu-Muslim Riots exploded in New Delhi, Economy was slumping and shedding millions of jobs etc. So with all these challenges many of these problems (especially economical) have gotten worse in India. But still according to the recent opinion polls Modi's High approval rate have soared even higher, touching 80 to 90 percent. Oftenly two most populist leaders US President Trump and Russian President Vladimir V. Putin are compared but according to the opinion poll Narendra Modi seems to be thriving in this crisis.**

**Keywords: COVID\_19, Pandemic, Approval rate, Narendra Modi.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study mainly focuses on the political happenings in India that were affected due to the breakout of COVID-19. COVID-19 did not only affect the health and medical aspect of the people but it gives a great push to the politics. COVID-19 gives various challenges for the government of India, besides it provides remedial solution for various political problems that were happening right before the breakout of COVID-19 such as Hindu Muslim Riots, Anti-government protest, CAB, NRP etc. As it is accepted by W.H.O. that there is no vaccine is yet invented for the COVID-19, so almost every country has to impose the lockdown and curfew as a security measures. But this lockdown has hit the economy of every country very badly, millions of Jobs were gone, that will result into the great change in the foreign policies. Besides it Hindu-Muslim

Riots were controlled, Anti-government protest was made it to stop. A mass migration of laborers put a question mark on the efficiency of government. But still the popularity of PM NarendraModi hike from 80 to 90 percent.

- **Lockdown is the only solution:**

As it is accepted by W.H.O. that there is no vaccine yet invented for curing the COVID-19. So lockdown is the only solution to remain safe. Various countries like Italy, Spain, and USA have to pay a very big cost by not imposing lockdown at proper time. India imposed lockdown in four phases. First phase started on March 25, 2020 and ended on April 14, 2020. Second Phase was from April 15, 2020 to May 3, 2020. Third Phase was imposed from May 4, 2020 to May 17, 2020. And Fourth phase is imposed on May 18, 2020 and will continue till May 31, 2020. On 17 May, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) extended the lockdown for a period for two weeks beyond 18 May, with additional relaxations. This lockdown helped in nipping the evil in the bud. Although various types of relaxations were given time to time but still first two phases were completed with strict lockdown and curfew. Various types of online facilities and announcements were made for the survival of peoples in this critical time. Main thing is to aware the people about COVID-19 without panicking them. So Indian Government remain almost successful to aware the people using electronic media, print media and social media. Various types of apps were launched to aware and facilitate the people such as Arogyasetu, COVA etc. Online curfew pass, home delivery of ration and medicine was also a great step towards welfare of people. On 26 March 2020, the Indian government announced a relief package of \$22.6 billion to assist the poor population hit economically by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a Government of India report filed with the Supreme Court of India, as of 7 April, state governments operated 22,567 relief camps for stranded migrant workers, of which 15,541 camps (amounting to 68% of all) were operated by Kerala, 1,135 camps by Maharashtra, 178 camps by Tamil Nadu and smaller numbers by other states. NGOs were operating 3,909 camps. (Hindu, 2020).

- **Hindu ritual as remedies:**

PM NarendraModi experiments some Hindu ritual like “Thalivajao” (play the plate) or “DiyaJalao”(lit a lamp or torch). On 5 April, 2020, citizens all over India cheered and showed unity and solidarity with the health workers, police, and all those fighting the disease by switching off the electric lights at home for 9 minutes from 9:00 p.m. to 9:09 p.m. and observed lighting ‘diyas’ and candle and flashing torchlight and mobile flashlight. He gave an argument in doing so that by producing sound by beating or playing the plate, a positive energy in the form of vibrations will help to kill the bacteria in the environment. So that will happen with lighting the lamps or torches. As heat energy and light energy will help to kill the germs in the environment. And above all these ritual practices will show our unity against this disease. Nobody knows that whether these practices helps in killing the germs or not but it definitely shows that how many supporters of BJP or PM NarendraModi are there. All these practices were advertised on electronic media, print media and on social media very frequently. On 16 April, lockdown areas were classified as "red zone", indicating the presence of infection hotspots, "orange zone" indicating some infection, and "green zone" with no infections (BBC, 2020).

- **Anti Government protest:**

On May 22, 2020 in Maharashtra anti government protest was on its full public display when BJP start agitation against Maharashtra VikasAghadi (MVA) and Thackeray led government under the banner of “Maharashtra Bachao” (Save Maharashtra). They were alleged that Maharashtra government remained completely failed in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. As Maharashtra has the highest death rate as compared to the other states in India. State BJP unit was shouting slogan against Thackeray Government that after two months of detecting first corona virus case and after one week chief minister Udhav Thackeray secured his nomination to the legislative council, did nothing the for controlling the COVID-19 pandemic. The BJP has also demanded an independent fiscal package worth Rs 50,000 crore for farmers, daily wage earners in the state to combat Covid-19.

Shiv Sena Yuva chief and tourism minister Aaditya Thackeray in response to BJP’s protest tweeted : “One political party state unit has set a new low and a new world record – the only party in the world to indulge in politics and in spreading fear, hate and division when the world has forgotten all of it to help each other. This party has forgotten the pandemic.”

Re-tweeting another photo where children are wearing black clothes, holding BJP flags and protesting, Thackeray said, “Absolutely shameful, what lust for power politics can make leaders do. Making children stand in heat, with their masks lowered, not covering their faces for a political protest when we need to keep them safe and indoors.” (sarkar, 2020). So such type of anti-government protest were seen in many not BJP states, but its effect was very nominal.

- **Anti-CAA protest versus COVID-19:**

The Citizenship Amendment Act (Bill) protest occurred after the enactment of CAA by Government of India on December 12, 2019. National Register of Citizens (NRC) and Nation Register of Population (NRP) were its associated proposals. The protest started in Assam and spread in other states such as New Delhi, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura very rapidly. The CAA amended the Citizenship of India to illegal migrants that are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, whether they belong to any religion like Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi, Jain, Buddhist or Christian. One more thing that is noticed that the refugees from Sri Lanka Tamils in India, Tibetan Refugees and Rohingyas from Myanmar are not the part of this bill. So the NRC will be an official record of all legal citizens of India.

Thus every citizen has to provide a prescribed set of document before the cutoff date to prove his or her citizenship according to this act. But this amendment has been criticized on the ground of discrimination on the basis of religion. It was alleged that it is open attack on the minority communities. So the protesters were demanded that this act should be taken back and not to be implemented (TimesofIndia, 2019).

The protest against the CAA, NRP and NRC has come into a halt due to the outbreak of Corona virus and imposing the section 144 in all states. “Shaheen Bagh Morcha” and “Mumbai Bagh” protests were very big challenges for the centre government. But all these protests were controlled by imposing the section 144, lockdown and curfew in all states. So the breakout of COVID-19 has effect the anti-CAA protest very badly.

- **Slumping Economy:**

Although lockdown is the only solution to handle with the COVID-19, but this lockdown halt all the production and earning capacity of whole nation. Even COVID-19 has effect the economy of all over the world. All the Manufacturing, Trading, Imports,

Exports, everything come to the stop due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Besides it government has to invest on the medical facilities, ration facilitates, door to door delivery of basics etc. Central government ordered that no salary will be deducted throughout lockdown period. So only expenses and no income and production broke the backbone of economy. HfS research also indicate that this slump in the economy is much bigger than that of 2008 slump. "More than 80% of the enterprises believe the impact of COVID-19 outbreak to be bigger than the 2008 downturn and it can reduce up to 15% of the existing consulting services" (HfS, 2020). In one of his report Goldman Sachs also indicate that India will experience a deep recession even after the lockdown is over. These estimates imply that real GDP will fall by 5 per cent in 2021 fiscal year which will be far deeper than any other recession, India has ever experienced.

- **Migration of Labourers:**

Sudden lockdown on March 25, 2020 has put all the production work come to the halt. With the shutdown of factories and workplaces due to the lockdown imposed in the whole country millions of migrant workers were forced to leave to their native areas because no work no income, food shortage and uncertainty about future leads them to leave to their native areas. Thousands of them began to go back their home on foot, with no means of transport and they were hungry during their travelling. Even hundreds of them were arrested for violating the lockdown. This mass migration of workers in pitiful conditions put a question mark on the efficiency of state and central government. According to the World Economic Forum there were estimated 139 million migrants in the country. And ILO already predicted that about 400 million workers would be poverty stricken due to the pandemic and imposition of lockdown.

On March 27, 2020 Home Ministry ordered the state to use the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) for providing food and shelter to the migrants and stop the unusual migration of workers. On March 29, 2020 Government issued orders that landlord should not demand rent during the lockdown. And States governments were ordered to set up immediate relief camps for the migrant workers. On May 16, 2020 Central Government announced the National Migrant Information System (NMIS). It was an online database created by the NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) (Tiwary, 2020).

- **Shedding of jobs:**

Due to the lockdown almost all the daily wages workers have lost their jobs. But the industrial and corporate sector like Insurance, Airways, Universities, and many more does not remain untouched from the bad effect of COVID-19 and imposition of lockdown. Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is a leading association related to the industry. It carried out an online survey in which about 200 CEOs from various sectors and industries participated. CII reported that almost all the firms will have to see the loss of about 52 per cent (that are further categorized in 37 per cent during lockdown and 15 per cent after lockdown) of the jobs in their concerned areas. And it is mere a result of outbreak of corona virus and imposition of lockdown (TimesofIndia, 2020).

## **2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Political opinion of the people of any country always remains a dependent factor of the activities and policies made by government for them. Now in this critical time of COVID-19 all the steps taken by the government to handle the situation and the impacts of COVID-19 will definitely affect the public opinion. So although COVID-19 being a pandemic has very tragic effects but still it covers many of the weaknesses of the system.

Anti-CAA protest was a very big challenge for the government that comes to the halt only to impose lockdown. Although there were many factors caused recession but the imposition of lockdown due to COVID-19 become a major factor for recession. So ultimately COVID-19 put a very deep effect of the political aspect of the nation.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Although Covid-19 is affected people medically, but the social, economical and political aspect of people are not remain untouched during the lockdown period. The whole social, Economical and Political structure is influenced due to the outbreak of Corona Virus. The popularity of NarendraModihike with unexpected swift. Anti-CAA protest has come to halt which was a very big challenge for the central government. Almost drowning economy has completely on the way of recession. Unexpected and unusual migration of workers in very pitiful condition has put a question mark on the efficiency of the government. Basic and medical facilities provided by the government are proved to be less efficient for the public that force the people to change political opinion about the ruling party. So in the nutshell we can say that COVID-19 has not only harmed the world biologically and medically but also socially, economically and politically also.

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