

## **Disease and Discrimination in the era of Globalization**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Disease and Discrimination have become a buzzword in recent times which have been used by medical professionals, bureaucrats, academicians and so on. The relationship between disease and discrimination occupies a crucial significance not only in development paradigm but also in the era of globalization particularly in Indian context where it is characterized by various other unequal institutions like caste, class and gender. In our society a person suffering from any disease especially from any kind of dreadful disease like HIV/AIDS, Cancer, Tuberculosis and Leprosy has to face a lot of difficulties and discrimination. The patient's misery usually gets increased with the passage of time as they are not accepted by their own family members, friends and relatives. It is seen that they are out-casted and deprived of many kinds of privileges and minimum facilities which are required to lead a healthy and respectful life. This creates a lot of pressure both mentally and physically to the patients. They emotionally get disturbed which may rather lead to the negative impact on their health. All kinds of rights and freedom are taken away from their life. It may lead them to live rest of their life with shame and guilt. Today in the era of globalization where our country's economy has developed and even literacy rate has increased with lot of advancement in the medical care and treatments but still now the orthodox thinking and blind belief of the people living in our society has not changed. We can see that the patients infected with the diseases like HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, leprosy are usually treated as untouchable and are very ill-treated and even neglected, with a fear that they may get themselves infected with the disease if they come in contact with the patient. People living in our society strongly believes in the concept that the patients suffering from such kind of diseases are often blamed for the reason that it is the result of their previous birth's karma due to which they have to suffer in this birth. Sometimes it is seen that even though they die, their body are not accepted by their family members and friends, having a fear that they will also suffer from the same disease even if they come in contact with the dead body. Globally the spread of diseases like that of cancer, HIV/AIDS has increased a lot and is still increasing in an alarming rate forcing the people of the nation to think globally to control its widespread and management of its treatment, healthcare facilities for the betterment of the patients. Due to the rapid mobility of the people across borders, the spread of infectious disease is a threat to everyone, particularly the poor people. With the advancement in the field of medicine and treatment, now HIV/AIDS and cancer is no longer a fatal disease but instead is manageable and a long-term condition. The durability of the individual life span can be increased a lot with proper medical care, treatments and facilities. Now-a-days, medical tourism can be seen and encouraged so that the patients can go and get their treatment in any place of the world, providing an opportunity for improving the chances of the individual or the patient's survival. This article tries to address the relationship of Disease and Discrimination in the era of globalization, how it is creating a misery in patient's life.

**Key Words :** Disease, Discrimination, Globalization

### **INTRODUCTION**

Globalization is a process whereby countries, regions, economy and people are closely connected to each other.

It has lead to the spread of infectious diseases all over the world in a much greater speed. Globalization is a complex phenomenon and a process by which the world becomes a "Global Village". It affects different aspects

such as economic, political, social and religious dimensions of any country. It involves the reduction of impediments to the movement of goods, people, information and finance across societal or national boundaries, with resulting increases in connections among them and mixing between people throughout the world. Globalization is the process of the flow of goods, capital, information and people across political and geographical boundaries which allow the infectious diseases to rapidly spread around the world. With the rapid development of the infrastructure, transportation and communication individuals can easily move from one country to that of another without any barriers. As to be seen in the world history, now every country is interdependent on each other. In simple words globalization is said to be the process of interaction and integration among the people worldwide. The term "globalization" means integration of economies and societies through cross country flow of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services, capital, finance and the people.

Guy Brainbant says that the process of globalization not only includes opening up of World Trade, development of advanced means of communication, internationalization of financial markets, growing importance of multinational corporations, population migrations and more generally increased mobility of persons, goods, capital and ideas but also of infectious diseases and pollution. Due to the continuous expansion of economic trade across continents and rapid transportation on travel, people infected with pathogens having short incubation periods can transmit disease across several countries. Efficient and inexpensive transportation has left few places inaccessible and increased the global trade in agricultural products. It has brought more and more people into the contact with animal diseases like that of bird flu, swine flu and recently Corona virus. Globalization has directly contributed to the emergence of pathogen such as the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) Corona virus (COVID-19) and is increasing the probability of pandemic influenza. Now globalization is creating a new ecology of disease.

#### **Disease:**

The term disease broadly refers to any condition that impairs the normal functioning of the body. It creates a lot of health problems and issues to the patients. Sometimes the symptoms are very eminent and serious that the patient is bound to visit a doctor for getting examined and later on medicated if necessary. Disease

is said to be a medical condition which may be caused by external factors such as pathogens or by internal dysfunctions. Each and every disease has its own signs and symptoms. It is very well known to us that disease usually causes pain, dysfunctions, distress, social problems or even death to the person infected with it or similar problems for those who come in direct contact with the patient. It is commonly said that death due to disease is called death by natural causes. In our society a person suffering from any disease especially from any kind of dreadful disease like that of HIV/AIDS, cancer, T.B and leprosy has to face a lot of difficulties and discrimination. With disease comes discrimination. The patient's misery usually gets increased with the passage of time as they are not accepted by their own family members, friends and relatives. It is seen that they are out-casted and deprived of many kinds of privileges and minimum facilities which are required to lead a healthy and respectful life. This creates a lot of pressure both mentally and physically to the patients. They emotionally get disturbed which may rather lead to the bad impact on their health. All kinds of rights and freedom are taken away from their life. It may lead them to live rest of their life with shame and guilt. In our society a disease person is treated as curse. They are often ill-treated, neglected and discriminated in the society.

#### **Discrimination:**

Discrimination is said to be a prejudiced treatment or consideration of or making a distinction towards a being based on group, class or category to which they are perceived to belong. Discrimination are of different types like that of age, caste criminal record, height, disability, family, status, gender, identity, gender expression, generation, genetic characteristics, marital status, nationality, color, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, social class, species as well as other categories. According to different laws of the countries discrimination is said to be a prejudice against people and also a refusal to give them their rights. According to the historical records no nation or no society has been immune to discrimination. It is seen that sometimes, they might be the victim or victimizer. Discrimination runs against the most fundamental values of a modern society. It can be said that it is a threat to democracy of a nation. Discrimination is not only forms a menace to the society, but also to the individual who is subjected to such an adverse treatment as it is a direct denial of equal worth of the victim. It can

be said that discrimination is the violation of person's identity. It totally crash or reduce the confidence and self-esteem of the victim. The consequences of discrimination may lead to alienation, exclusion, radicalization and decreasing psychological well-being. Discrimination involves making distinctions. There are many ways in which people can discriminate, some begin, other malign. Throughout the world, discrimination is occurring in such an extreme that it has created an unpleasant atmosphere to live in.

### **Globalization:**

Today in the era of globalization where our country's economy has developed and even literacy rate has increased with lot of advancement in the medical care and treatments but still now the orthodox thinking and blind belief of the people living in our society has not changed. The discrimination towards the patient infected with any kind of diseases is still increasing in an alarming rate. Nations where the illiteracy rate and poverty of the people is high, it is seen that discrimination towards this patients is also very high. We can see that the patients infected with the diseases like HIV/AIDS, T.B, leprosy are usually treated as untouchable and are very ill- treated and even neglected, with a fear that they may get themselves infected with the disease if they come in contact with the patient. People living in our society strongly believes in the concept that the patients suffering from such kind of diseases are often blamed for the reason that it is the result of their previous birth's karma due to which they have to suffer in this birth. Sometimes it is seen that even though they die, their body are not accepted by their family members and friends, having a fear that they will also suffer from the same disease if they come in contact with the dead body. Globally the spread of diseases like that of cancer, HIV/AIDS has increased a lot and is still increasing in an alarming rate forcing the people of the nation to think globally to control its widespread and management of its treatment, healthcare facilities for the betterment of the patients. Due to the rapid mobility of the people across borders, the spread of infectious disease is a threat to everyone, particularly the poor people. It is seen that the country dealing with economic crisis like that of the developing and under-developed countries has to face a large widespread of the disease as they struggle to provide proper financial assistance on the research and development techniques to control the disease. The people

of developing and under-develop countries moves from one place to another in search of their livelihood and jobs. The migration is the main reason for the widespread of diseases. It is due to the hunger and poverty of nation which worsen the situation dealing with this disease. With the advancement in the field of medicine and treatment, now HIV/AIDS and cancer is no longer a fatal disease but instead is manageable and a long- term condition. The durability of the individual life span can be increased a lot with proper medical care, treatments and facilities. Today with the modern modes of transportation and communication people can travel around the world at a much faster pace. It can be said that with the use of air travel, people are able to go to foreign lands, gets infected with a disease and not have any symptoms of illness until they reach their own home, in the meantime it is seen that they even have spread the disease to others by getting in contact with them on the way. With the progress of medicine many vaccines and cures have been developed for the people who suffer from the diseases like plague, syphilis, cholera, malaria, dengue.

In this period of globalization where the scientific technology has developed a lot to bring out various vaccines, treatments to reduce the deadly effect and death rate of various infectious diseases. Continuous research in the field of medicine is going on to improve the longevity of the patient's life. Now a patient infected with HIV/AIDS should not feel himself to have got a death sentence because a lot of advance treatment, clinics and activists have come forwarded to handle their health issues and problems. For last 30 years, the world's response to HIV/AIDS has gone through a number of dramatic transformations which includes the rise of global AIDS activism and institutions like that of HIV clinics, ART programmes and the development of effective anti-retroviral therapies. HIV/AIDS has always been one of the most thoroughly global of diseases. The notion of HIV infection as a death sentence is weakening this days. We cannot say that full normalization has been achieved by any means- only that the social forms and interpretations of the disease have changed significantly in recent years due to the process of globalization. The stigma relating to the patient infected with this disease has reduced but not to a large extent. Still now they are discriminated in each and every field of their life, making the struggle of the patients harder to survive in the society. They eventually had to face negligence, hatred, criticisms from other people living in the society. For an individual,

healthy and secured life, free from illness, ailments and a reasonable lifespan remains the vital consideration. A good health benefits an individual by providing an opportunity to develop abilities required to achieve personal goals.

In the era of globalization, there is unequal distribution of wealth and poverty. In the international division of production and labor which further leads to opening of non- industrialized countries to capital and export from developed countries, a intensive flow of finance, no longer under the control of the national states, but subordinated to the large profit- seeking transnational conglomerates and leading to an unprecedented accumulation of wealth and inequality. Globalization is characterized by an extensive opening of world markets, with liberalization and deregulation of international commerce, which frequently destroys thousands of jobs in the new or incipient industries in under-developed countries. Without any protection, their industry proves incapable of competing with the First World's highly automated and more efficient industries which have began exporting unemployment in poor countries is an unmistakable source of disease. Several studies in many parts of the world have correlated unemployment to degraded individual, family and societal health conditions. There are various causes of unemployment like that of Deteriorating nutritional conditions, mental health, along with it, the increasing difficulties in accessing medical care and medicines. It leads to worsening overall health situation. Due to the easy access to rapid transportation and displacement of people facilitate the spread of parasites and vectors among human populations worldwide.

Some international efforts fostered by globalization should be seen as a sign of hope in cooperation and solidarity, both in the field of health and the economy. The emerging infectious diseases and the growth of information technology have produced new demands and possibilities for disease surveillance and response. The increasing numbers of outbreak reports must be assessed rapidly so that control efforts can be initiated and unsubstantiated reports can be identified to protect countries from unnecessary economic damage. The World Health Organization has created a process for timely outbreak verification to convert large amounts of data into accurate information for suitable action. Public health experts recognize that globalization creates challenges for infectious disease policy nationally and internationally. These challenges are many and diverse

but mainly it can be conceptualized as horizontal and vertical health challenges. Horizontal challenges constitute the public health problems that arise from increased speed and volume of international trade and travel. The global movement of population and product forces countries to confront heightened threats from the cross-border transmission of pathogenic microbes. The horizontal challenges are thus, policy challenges among many states. The vertical challenges represent the problems that countries face inside their territories, from national to the local level. Many countries especially developing countries, need help and assistance from other states and international organizations in order to improve domestic public health responses to the consequences of globalization for infectious disease prevention and control.

The global burden of disease objectives is to develop projection scenarios of mortality and disability. These data have been used to project major threats for global health now and incoming decades, to define "basic packages" of cost effective health interventions that national governments may use to set policy priorities. In the era of globalization it can be said that functions of everyday social life, including health, are no longer carried out assiduously within the confines of individual states but are undertaken across frontiers on a regional, continental, or universal basis. The international organization like that of WHO, and non-governmental organizations would oversee these activities. Not only would this development benefit general social welfare of the world, it would also help to solve the problem of peace and security. The International Health Regulation (IHR) is revised so that it plays as an important step in confronting the health security threats posed by the globalization of infectious diseases.

### **Disease and discrimination in Indian context**

In India, knowledge of an individual or a person about a diseases its prevention and treatment is based on the beliefs formed by the community. Majority of the rural population believe that wrath of gods and goddesses, evil eye, spirit of ghost intrusion are supposed to be the cause of disease. Despite development in education, medicine and health fields, still now people believe in different misconceptions associated with the disease. These misconceptions are false beliefs which are harmful or may not be beneficial at all. Awareness is very much needed to remove the stigma associated with the diseases. Various programs are planned and implemented in India

to raise awareness about the various chronic diseases like the AIDs, cancer, leprosy. Stigma associated with leprosy is due to inadequate or incorrect knowledge about the disease and its curability. Cancer is a public health problem globally. People think cancer can't be prevented but in early stages it can be treated effectively. If warning signs of cancer are not ignored then it is possible to prevent it spread further. Leprosy can be cured completely, but large percentages of the population don't know the early signs and symptoms of leprosy and the importance of early treatment. Educational activities such as group discussions, posters and use of slogans are an integral part of health services to educate their families and the general communities on leprosy and its treatment in order to dispel ignorance, misconceptions and prejudices. The nutritional and health status of a person are interdependent. Poor health reduces appetite and inhibits the absorption of nutrients in food. Malnutrition weakens the body and makes it more susceptible to a variety of diseases. Nowadays, medical tourism can be seen and encouraged so that the patients can go and get their treatment in any place of the world, proving an opportunity for improving the chances of the individual or the patient's survival. People travel to other countries in search of more affordable health options. In the era of globalization, although there is a lot of discrimination relating to various diseases but still there is increased awareness programs and advancement in the field of medicine and treatment in our society. But with lot of advancement in treatment of various infectious diseases, still now the negative attitude of people toward the patients has not reduced. They have to face a lot of discrimination and negligence and hatred from other people living in the society. This creates a mental disturbance, distress, tension and guilty feeling among the patients which sometimes force them to take an extreme step of ending their life by committing suicide. A kind of bitterness feeling toward their life is seen.

Recently in our country India, we are facing a health crisis because of the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease. Not only in our country, the entire globe is struggling hard to save the life of the people from the hands of this dreadful disease. Within the span of almost 7 months, more than crores of people are already infected with this disease and lakhs of people from all over the world has lost their precious life. Without having no vaccines and any proper treatment of corona virus, is leading to a very devastating situation. It can be said that India is facing

the biggest health emergency since the country has gained independence. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a very bad effect in each and every sector of the market leading to the decreasing the country's economy in an alarming rate. The economic backbone of the poor people and middle class people has completely shattered. They are even struggling very hard to give food and shelter to their family. There was declaration of lockdown in our country in order to break the chain of the pandemic which increased the misery of the migrant labours, they lost their jobs, having no other option they were forced to return to their native place that is their village. During the lockdown all kinds of local or interstate transportation facilities were stopped, which created a lot of misery and discrimination towards the migrant labours. Many instances came where the poor migrant labours have to walk thousands of miles with their families. Even some of them with bare foots, empty stomach and not having a single money in their pocket walked for day and night in order to reach their destination. This inter-state migration of the labours lead to an increase of the COVID-19 positive patients, worsening the health condition of the country. The Government in order to have a control on the outbreak of this disease and to keep the other people safe from this infection many community containment center and even home containment facilities were given, but some people came to their own home directly, lived with the other family members in the same home, even did not followed any kind of self-isolation measures. They did this without giving any kind of information to the local authorities resulted in the increase of the COVID-19 patients and high death rates. From all over the country, some cases were seen where the COVID-19 patients has to face a lot of discrimination and stigmatization by the people in the society. They are made to feel guilty, ignored and blamed for spreading this disease in the community. They are seen to be boycotted in the society even if they are already discharged from the hospital or have recovered. This kind of discrimination towards them has created a distress, tension and mental pressure leading to long, negative health consequences on them. It is even seen that not only the patient but also the entire family has to go through a lot of suffering and pain .The family members even have to face discrimination by other members of the society.

### **Conclusion:**

In this era of Globalization, with the advancement

of medical infrastructure, medicines and healthcare field, but still we can see a lot of discrimination and stigmatization of the patients related to the disease like that of HIV/AIDS, Cancer, Leprosy and recently Corona virus. This is due to the fear, that if they come in contact with the patients directly they can be infected. This is creating a lot of mental and physical problems to the patients. Governments of different countries are trying to create and provide awareness programmes to reduce the misconceptions, old beliefs, confusion and attitude of people toward various diseases. We should come forward in order to provide a positive, healthy attitude toward any patients related to any kind of disease. This will make them to fight against the battle more smoothly. A feeling of sympathy and unity should be shown towards them, making the world a happier place to live in.

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