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## Can Universal brotherhood and Collective Consciousness be a way out for COVID?

*Sneha Chakraborty*<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract:**

It may seem 'idealistic' to let philosophy pave the path for uncontrollable changes in our lives. However, if we look deeply the answers to the most difficult questions lie within the process of self-introspection and realization. Philosophy meditates the entire process from darkness to light, raveling through the uncharted territories leading towards enlightenment through self-evaluation. It enables us to fight against not only the inner demons but also the surrounding consequences. In this article, I would look at the implication of some supposedly (abstract) ideals and their successful role in fighting against the life-threatening Coronavirus. The pandemic was a situation that altered our lives upside down. The article would evaluate that the biggest battles are fought within oneself with the power of knowledge. It would try to portray how *Covid* can be fought with the unification of 'self and others' by approaching universal brotherhood and humanism.

**Keywords:** self-introspection, knowledge, universal -brotherhood, humanism.

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<sup>1</sup> Jadavpur University | [chakrabortysneha1999@gmail.com](mailto:chakrabortysneha1999@gmail.com)

### **Knowledge and the nature of existence:**

Human beings have been considered to be the greatest creations of Mother Earth. We have perceived, consumed, accumulated and distributed knowledge for eons to sharpen our acumen and fight against catastrophes.

There are two types of knowledge, namely; the knowledge of truth and the knowledge of description. Although, we were aware of how a supposed 'pandemic' situation may seem like but to experience it was still a farfetched nightmare. It was embedded in the courses of our history books until it became a lived reality. The emotions of shock and disintegration fueled the questions regarding our existence and the nature of that 'existence' at a time when the entire world ceased to exist. We experienced negativity at every step of our way and were horrified with the unfathomable damage that it caused to us and the people around us. The news of deaths, homelessness and the suffering of people, loss of security without any economical support prevailed in our minds consistently which shattered all the pre-destined

goals or plans. The entire canvas of the world seems to have been painted in black with nowhere to run or no means to cope. The amount of destruction caused to every individual was varied but the impact of the deadly virus affected each stratum/ community/ group in some way or the other. In this entire situation, there was a discourse between the knowledge of truth and the knowledge of description. We have read about the Spanish flu, the famine that took millions of lives but to physically bear the consequences of an equivalent catastrophe bore fruits in its entirety. There wasn't any intermediary process of inferences or any 'knowledge of truths' that would facilitate our understanding of the *Covid* situation. It was something that was never experienced by anyone for a long period. There were no supposed laid-out prescriptions that would enable us to cope with the situation or a pre-described regiment that needed to be followed. Therefore, one of the first questions that arose was how to deal with it? How do we separate the shock, discomfort, and energize our minds to cope with the same? How do we reinforce ourselves with positivity, peace of mind and come out from the

turf of helplessness? Since everyone experienced the pandemic in their way, here are some of my coping mechanisms which enabled me to confront the pandemic without running away from it. This was combined with the application of some of the philosophies of the greatest minds in the world which allowed me to take one step at a time and search for peace within myself without looking at it from any outside source.

#### **Peace, Gratitude, and Existence :**

The first step towards confronting the pandemic began by taking control of my life and acknowledging the pandemic without running away from it. Human beings are complete in their unique way; therefore, any change that we ought to bring in the outside world must begin with peering into ourselves. This took place with the portrayal of gratitude for my existence and submission to the unknown and the superior and the uncontrollable entity that exists beyond us. There are no absolutes, I realized. Even for a singular knowledge of the truth, there are greater truths that couldn't be grasped. The way of living begins with the process of self-liberation and

emancipation. In Hindu philosophy, there is no ultimate demise of individuals, but the soul changes its destination from one body to the other. The physical body is a mere commodity that wraps the soul from inside and lets it go when necessary. Therefore, the fear associated with death, the loss of loved ones which became a reality during the pandemic found a way to channelize itself through the discourse of philosophy from 'Bhagavad Gita'. Therefore, the only emotion that we would showcase would be the sense of gratification with the life we have got until the universe unravels another adventure for us. The acknowledgment and the subsequent submission to the greater driving force and the larger truths about life/world need to be paid into cognizance. Human Beings are mere mediators who may accumulate knowledge but they will always be the victims of a larger process system without directly being accountable to the same. Subsequently, over time, it opened a ray of hope with a silver lining for me. It also showed how the entire universe is braided with a single thread, where 'all knowledge of truths demands acquaintances with things that are often called abstract ideals or

universals.' The shared pangs of individuals across the continents became a part of their collective consciousness that unified them by multiplying the strength and workforce and acted as a source of inspiration to bring some positive actions out of the pandemic. The sense of collectivity became the motivator to cope with the situation and be more empathetic with the people around. The notion of self which was disintegrated from others became whole. In this manner, we saw people coming out from every sector of society and trying to posit some changes to make a difference in someone's lives without even knowing their identities. They were all seen to be a part of a singular community of mankind that needed support, assurance, and resources to fight against the pandemic. Therefore, when confronted with an uncontrollable force, it is only through the creative, empathetic, collaborative measures of the individuals that can result in igniting the human spirit and bring productive changes.

The Hegelian philosophy offers the idea of fragmentation and the incapability of existing without the

compliment supplied by the rest of the world. The world is seen to be like a jigsaw puzzle where one piece of reality constructs another one.

We normally start on an incomplete idea. We only find on examination that if we forget its incompleteness but one finding gradually leads to another. Space, time, matter, and evil are all striving and struggling with each other and would eventually disappear and we would finally see an eternal perfect and unchanging spiritual unity. The pandemic showed us the power of unity and made us realize that the entire universe is tied in a singular chain. The disintegration of one will eventually lead to the fallback of the other and so on. So, we need to realize the unification of mankind and the symbiotic relationship which marks the process of the universe. It is through inter-dependence and mutual reciprocity that the wheels of earth can move forward constructively. I would like to point out that, though pandemic took a lot of things away from us it also created a foundation for an ethical and philosophical code of conduct for every one of us. With every passing day of our lives, we were always engaged in

our productive way to make a difference in the world but had somehow forgotten about caring for people by showcasing the essence of compassion, empathy, and kindness more frequently. However, with a pandemic, the entire mankind was left in a vulnerable position where we had nothing and nobody except the assurance of universal brotherhood and universal consciousness. The man-made distinction in race, color, creed, or class broke its shackles across boundaries, states, provinces, and countries and became the roaring voice of creative humanism and thereof human experience. It demanded to look at the world from its totality with interconnectedness without drawing narrow boundaries of distinction. Rabindranath Tagore's lecture at the National Council of Education (former name of Jadavpur University) on World Literature or 'Vishya Sahitya' spoke about the same totalitarian concept but on the context of breaking the shackles of regional or national literature by inculcating something beyond provincial boundaries.

*"Do not so much as imagine that I will show you the way to such a world literature. Each of us must make his way*

*forward according to his own means and abilities. All I have wanted to say is that just as the world is not merely your plough field, plus my plough field, plus his plough field, because to know the world that way is only to know it with a yokel-like parochialism, similarly world literature is not merely your writings, plus my writing, plus his writings. We generally see literature in this limited, provincial manner. To free oneself of that regional narrowness and resolve to see the universal being in world Literature, to apprehend such totality in every writer's work, and to see its interconnectedness with every man's attempt at self-expression - that is the objective we need to pledge ourselves to."*<sup>i</sup> (Tagore's lecture at the 'National Council for Education', 1907)

However, his aesthetics and philosophical approach towards securing world peace and integration with the accumulation of works of literature across the globe can also be a learning lesson of approaching every hurdle. Tagore's theme has its core in philosophy and humanism. It can be applied not only to literature but to every walk of life which encourages rising above the narrow-mindedness world of distinction.



*“Tagore is also asserting the unique function and ability of art to give meaning and dignity to ordinary human life. The world of literature creates a parallel universe that makes the wretchedness of ordinary life bearable. Earlier in the essay, she uses the metaphor of the halo around the burning core of the sun to explain the relationship between art and life, the augmentation that the former brings to what would otherwise be unbearably hot or invisible, human life shod of all its refinements ...”ii*

Therefore, literature and life inspire each other and they both combine to provide resolutions to difficult situations. It is through the accumulation, conglomeration, and contribution of philosophy with literature that confronted *Covid* in its entirety. However, I agree that there had been still a lack of caution from the authority and the people. People in India are still fighting against the virus after a year as there had been a record spike in the number of people who got affected by the disease. The precautionary measures are not being implemented properly along with that there had been a persistent shortage of vaccination and oxygen supply in the

hospitals. It seems that we are back to square one with amplified risks. We are angered, disgusted, and impatient with the deregulatory system. As I have already mentioned that Philosophy may not provide us with all the necessary solutions to the problem but it broadens our horizon to look beyond the pre-destined, pre-occupied belief system and physicality of objects and opt for an extra edge. We need to confront the situation once again with caution, objectivity, and hope. The significance of pleasure, simple joys of life seems to have ceased to exist by making us completely vulnerable, and the aforesaid ideals of universal creativity with the effort from every individual could again become the way out and the only shelter to seek refuge to. Therefore, the anger needs to be submitted, the disgust needs to be submerged, the disintegration needs to be evaluated and all these strong emotions need to be channelized to bring the positivity back. If the option is between, fight and flight, then fight (back).

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<sup>i</sup> The quotations for Tagore's speech are taken from the new translation by Rijula Das and Makarand R. Paranjape, still unpublished; thus, no page numbers are provided.

<sup>ii</sup> Makarand R. Paranjape. (2011 August) 'Tagore's Idea of Literature, A IDEIA DE LITERATURA MUNDIAL DE TAGORE'. Paper was first presented at the Rabindranath Tagore Birth Centenary Celebrations at the University of Yangon, Myanmar.

