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Reasoning Uncertainties associated with COVID-19

Dr. Sreetama Misra¹

Abstract:

The article explores the uncertainties and adversities associated with Covid-19 pandemic and the way this crisis has disrupted human lives from the grassroots. The pandemic situation has resulted in weakening our normal living and shaking our socio-economic securities, thereby forcing us to live in social isolation. It is time for humanity to regain the lost trust, to reshape life with re-establishing trust in individual and social life and exercise reason so as to address future catastrophes like eco-crisis, climate change and so on, which could be no lesser than Covid-19 pandemic. The paper, therefore, calls for establishing new normal certainties amidst uncertainties and existential emergencies that mankind is facing today.

Keywords: Uncertainties, Emergency, Crisis, Reason, Covid-19 Pandemic, Humanity

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Belda College, West Bengal
sreetamaphil@gmail.com

Reasoning Uncertainties:

Perhaps the century's toughest challenge is Covid-19 pandemic, which has triggered the lives of humanity and have put all of our existence at stake. Covid-19 has challenged our ways and styles of lives, and has engulfed us with the crisis of uncertainties – relating to adversities, hunger, oppression and social exclusion. We have jumped into uncertainties, on the one hand, we have personal uncertainty (belongingness uncertainty), where we face existential terror because of our adherence to new socio cultural norms, new normal values, and world views. On the other hand, we have the wider epidemical uncertainty – loss of uncertainties have thickened the pillars of trust and philosophically speaking, humanity has been forced to enter into the world of distrust which comprises lack of competence, lack of optimism and lack of good will. This distrust, as I have just put forward, and that arised due to lack of uncertainties, is something with which we are constantly fighting with. This pandemic situation has made us learn how to reason in unreasonable times, and I shall reflect on how to fill the gap arising in society due to

uncertainties. In simpler words, we shall enquire and look into whether we can at all reason uncertainties. The article is structured in three segments. In the first part, I shall analyse the possibilities of re-establishing trust in times of emergency. Secondly, I shall ponder upon whether an egalitarian society can at all be made feasible in the current state of social isolation. Third, on the basis of the discussion of the above two queries, I shall look forward and see whether a sound society is at all feasible in the lives human beings in such unreasoned times.

Why Emergency?

I prefer calling this pandemic situation, an emergency – an existential emergency and socio-political emergency on the other. Covid-19 situation has turned almost to be kind of war-like situation. It is a war not with weapons, but with good will and common efforts, a war which we all have to fight as a community and solve as a community. This is definitely not a war with weapons, but definitely we are experiencing as well as mustering the similar kind of hardships as we do in times of war. We know not what tomorrow will bring to all of us. We are

living in a blinded state, amidst crisis with new hopes for possible certainties in future. We now dream of a life that existed in the past before the covid crisis. The reasoned enquiry in this time of uncertainty is even more deeper: How would the new-normal life be, if at all it comes to us, what new implications and conditions of living it might impose on humanity.

The epochal change brought about by Covid-19 virus has shattered everyone worldwide leading to social isolation in an extreme form. The current pandemic situation has resulted in extreme isolation, it has resulted in the incapability of an individual to distinguish truth from falsehood through reason. All our lives are locked today (like the Platonic form of cave) distorting our natural realities, thereby making it difficult to distinguish truth from false knowledge. This sudden uncertain emergency has triggered us in to a state of distrust and disbelief towards all governmental decision making procedures. Let us ponder upon how this distrust works. Trust is an important concept in the arena of ethical discourse. Nancy Potter in her book 'How Can I be Trusted? A Virtue

Theory of Trustworthiness'ⁱ portrays the idea of trust in the light of virtue-theory. Potter understands trust not merely as risk-taking, but as a matter of responsibility. The basic elements of trust are Optimism, Reliabilism & Goodwill. However, in this Covid situation, there is lack of trust and distrust that arose from doubt and lack of competence, lack of optimism and lack of good will. We have become confined so much so that there is little choice/dependence on our government decisions. We have all become puppets and are flown into the perplexities of uncertainty. Trust has to fill the gap between our uncertainties and the risk of harm associated with uncertainties. In this pandemic situation, humanity is facing the risk of multiple harm including economic harm. We are constantly trying to protect our communities from the risk of harm. Protection from harm is necessary, not for those who do not have to much think about their immediate financial future, but for those who have to depend on day to day wages, and this crisis have inadvertently pushed the poor into deeper crisis. This is the time, we ought to look back at our golden past and

bring back the values of togetherness, cooperation and belief towards all those warriors who are working in the frontline during this pandemic.

Why being Equal?

We have the right to lead a 'good life'. Since the Socratean era, philosophers have been constant in making their efforts how one ought to live and develop a good life. Standing in the vertex of this pandemic situation, it is very true that the notion of good life has radically changed over time, and today we have quarantined ourselves for the larger good of the community and for the greater societal benefit. So, it is definitely perturbing and a matter of concern for all of us how could we actually cultivate the new normal situation in the wake of Covid-19. The 'new normal' phenomenon of styling human lives - as the pandemic situation has gifted us has enthroned human beings and made us learn how to develop solidarity through isolation, how to develop and construct the community feeling by following the protocols of Covid-19. We are on the blink of reshaping our lives through these protocol measures, a new way of

viewing our lives and a new way of normalising socio-cultural laws.

A thousand dollar query that pops round the minds of all human beings is that how can we build up a new order of social norms that is fit in for justice. What can be the new normal order of equalizing elements that stand for justice in terms of ensuring health, education and security to all? Till now, human beings do not enjoy the privileges of universal health care system, and we do want to get the benefits of such health care system. We strive for justice in health care, in terms of imposing infrastructure and equal opportunities in private and government hospitals. The current pandemic undoubtedly has opened the doors to an utilitarian wave in the context of health care services. The health authorities permitted the asymptomatic patients to get self-care treatment at home, and indicated the critical as well as intensive treatments at hospitals only for those who are critically ill. The pandemic actually has spell an end to the egalitarian concept of distributive justice, in Rawlsian terminology.

The burning question crops in front of us: Will the Covid-19 situation

bring an end to the egalitarian health scheme/education scheme across the country? This is undoubtedly an exceptional circumstance brought about due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation. New education policy has already come up, it reflects that we are no longer confined to theoretical assumption, but human living is anchored in grass root realities. The greatest setback in education system even in the last hundred years was faced by human beings during this pandemic time. How do we secure the future of our next generation? What measures can actually help us overcome the crisis and move towards an egalitarian society? Keeping in view the new world perspectives, we should all have firm belief in the order of the universe and adhere to the commitments of egalitarianism, secularism and the principles of democracy.

Addressing the Crisis:

Philosophizing the crisis in times of such adversities leads us to ponder upon a few urgent quandaries. Is it really possible to search for certainty in an uncertain world as we are experiencing? Do we need to define

'normal' in a different way from now onwards? Ethics and morality has demanded a lot of rethinking on the stringent issues of morality. In times of covid-19 crisis, how far are we really giving up our individual liberties? One the one hand, when the epidemiologists are busy in reclaiming that the only method to stop virus transmission is through social distancing, how far can we do so keeping our individual liberties at stake in social, economic & political affairs? Yes, we ought to do so, thinking about the vulnerable living in highly populated areas, where community spread infusions is at the peak. We have to keep at stake our individual freedom for the well-being of all. Because in times of crisis, the larger interests of the society outweighs our smaller individual interests.

The pandemic crisis has paved the way for a new normal world. But how would the new normal be like. We are all eagerly waiting for it. True that the world leaders have little less time to spare on all the national concerns, but we could foresee the new normalization in our education, economy, healthcare and all. As of now, everything is halted, including

human lives, and hope. We are, at the moment, dependent on the economists, physician, dieticians, as well as statistician for their regular assessments on the national/global lockdown and the figures that knock the door of the miserable every day. Perhaps Nature has scripted a new way for the world to perish, but humanity has always proven to remain daunting amidst all miseries and it will continue doing so.

The underlying anticipation is that Covid-19 could be one of the many more pandemics humanity might suffer in the future. In this context, we ought to keep in mind that climate change is a slow pandemic in itself and that in the years to come, it would prove to be more dangerous, and could prove to be no less dreadful than Covid-19 crisis. The pandemic has taught lessons for humanity to build up a sustainable model of nature. Even though there is no direct proven link between Covid-19 and climate change, yet scientists point out that global warming can change the range of a virus or its host species, thereby giving rise to new species of viruses and so on. Extreme precautionary approaches

need to be adopted to avoid the ecosystem from getting destabilized. The most vital task of humanity is safeguarding our biodiversity in the midst of crisis when the earth is passing through disturbed relationships with nature and other non-human species. In such context, it has become extremely significant to address global problems of these kinds. India's lockdown, in the nature of curfew has witnessed one of the country's most pressing emergencies. Humanity is on the verge of collapse, it is the time when humanity can stand up again and rely on the words of wisdom, on the scientific temperament and the principles of justice. So, keeping aside the politics of nationalism, as Chomsky says 'the criminal classes are relentless in their pursuit of power and profit, whatever the human consequences'ⁱⁱ, we have to hear the urge in favour of Humanity. We have to fight an invisible battle between certainties and uncertainties. Our life is in uncertainties and we have to address uncertainties through the power of reason and wisdom alone.

ⁱ Nancy Potter, 2002, 'How Can I be Trusted? A Virtue Theory of Trustworthiness, Oxford, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

ⁱⁱ Noam Chomsky, Boston Review: A Political and Literary Forum, September 16, 2020.

<http://bostonreview.net/science-nature-global-justice/noam-chomsky-robert-pollin-c-j-polychroniou-political-economy-saving>

