



Health-war Politics, Economy, Indian Society and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*

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Suresh Kumar, Ph.D.

Former chair, Department of African Studies, University of Delhi, India

Introduction

The nature of Indian society believes in *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*,¹ a Sanskrit verse in Hindu texts; “Vasudhaiva” being the earth, and “Kutumbakam” meaning the family. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is translated as “the world is one family.” The complete Sanskrit verse explains that Indian philosophy carries people with a generous heart and all of humanity is a family. The verse reads:

“One is a relative, the other stranger, say the small minded. The entire world is a family, live the magnanimous.”

¹ See Maha Upanishad Chapter 6.Verse 71. अयं नञिः परो वेतगिणना लघुचेतसाम् । उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥ (महोपनिषद्, अध्याय 4, श्लोक 71) (Ayam nij paro veti ganana laghuchetsam. Udarcharitanam tu Vasudhaiva KutumbakamVasudhaiva Kutumbakam).

This ancient tradition of millennia ago is a non-Western practice that does not believe in, but rather eschews war, hatred or any kind of imperial expedition for land and resources. The history of India has informed the practice of this belief, and the country has never adopted an annexation policy for land, wealth, and power on foreign lands. While Mongols, Turks, Mughals, Dutch, French, Portuguese, and British armies annexed India at different times in history. India never reverted to war and annexation. The Western foreign policy of European industrialization bred capitalism, eventually leading to years of war, including the First and Second World Wars, in which land, wealth and power grabs were the unstated objectives. Still, India never back tracked from its adherence to the idea of the world as one family, the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

That the world is but one family, at times difficult to comprehend, given its reliance on perseverance and consistency in practice that, when short-changed or neglected or ignored often leads to the exact opposite concept: the world as individuals after their own individual pursuits. Post-independence India implemented *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* as an objective of foreign policy, dating to its days of supporting anti-colonial struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Later would come a lead role in the 1961 establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a union of developing states bonded in mutual respect, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. India raised its voice against the apartheid system of segregation and discrimination in South Africa. In sum, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* has been in play in India during many epic international moments.

Since 1990, as globalization and market-oriented policies have stepped to the forefront of sociopolitical and socioeconomic issues, India has worked successfully as a family member of one world to mitigate and assist with African and Asian economic, political and social challenges. Former President of India Pranab Mukherjee, who served as the 13th chief executive of his country from 2012 to 2017, displayed *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in forging India's foreign policy objectives, announcing, "The international community must work together now, with wisdom, to create tolerance and understanding for addressing the

“The international community must work together now, with wisdom, to create tolerance and understanding for addressing the complex issues confronting mankind, and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* comes in mind.”

complex issues confronting mankind, and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* comes in mind.”² Even today, the Indian government uses this foreign policy goal on all the different international platforms — from the UN, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), African Union, Southeast Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and bilateral country deliberations. India has provided critical relief in emergencies in Yemen (2015 evacuation of civilians caught in Saudi Arabian airstrikes), Bangladesh (2007 Cyclone Sidr), Myanmar (2008

Cyclone Nargis), Mozambique (humanitarian and disaster relief in 2019) and Fiji (2020 Cyclone Yasa). India was represented during recent negotiations of the Paris Agreement, and now the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted India’s creation of *Vaccine Maitri*, or “Vaccine Friendship.”

India has helped to fulfill the global demand for pharmaceuticals and medical support, and has made possible high recovery rates and corresponding low fatality rates at the domestic level. India supported the creation of SAARC Covid-19 Fund in 2020 — established to mitigate the risks associated with the pandemic in the South Asia region — with an initial \$10 million USD contribution. Further, the country has facilitated a special visa program for doctors and nurses, is coordinating a regional air ambulance agreement and building a network for epidemiology to prevent future pandemics. These efforts, in their initial stages and born of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, have benefitted Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Mauritius, Nepal, Seychelles and Gulf countries in the initial stages.

² Mukherjee, Pranab. “President’s speech at the Banquet hosted by the President of Israel in Jerusalem.” Indian Ministry of External Affairs. 14 Oct. 2015. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/25933/presidents+speech+at+the+banquet+hosted+by+the+president+of+israel+in+jerusalem+october+14+2015>, accessed 20 May 2021.

Keeping age-old relations with Africa, India's *Vaccine Maitri* program of assistance delivered more than 210,000 vials of Covid-19 vaccine to 43 African countries (Table 1) in the initial stages. India's provision of Covid-19 vaccines has been impactful: more than 158,000 vials to SAARC countries, more than 42,000 vials to ASEAN countries, more than 17,000 vials to Central Asian countries, more than 59,000 vials in the Gulf countries and more than 57,000 vials to Canada, UK and UN Peacekeepers, as noted in Table 2. More *Vaccine Maitri* impact includes more than 58,000 vials to South America and Central America countries, and 3,000 vials each to Oceania and Caribbean countries, as recorded in Table 3.

TABLE 1.³ INDIA GLOBAL SUPPORT UNDER *VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM* (AFRICA CONTINENT)
 (COVID-19 VACCINE SUPPLIES IN 100,000)

Country	Grants	Commercial	Total
Algeria	0	0.50	0.50
Angola	6.24	0	6.24
Benin	0	1.44	1.44
Botswana	0.30	0	0.30
Cameroon	0	3.91	3.91
Comoros	0	0.12	0.12
Cape Verde	0	0.24	0.24
Djibouti	0	0.24	0.24
DR Congo	0.50	0	0.50
Egypt	0.50	0	0.50
Ethiopia	0	21.84	21.84
Eswatini	0.20	0.12	0.32
Gambia	0.36	0	0.36
Ghana	0.50	6.00	6.50
Guinea	0	1.94	1.94
Guinea Bissau	0	0.29	0.29
Ivory Coast	0.50	5.04	5.54

³ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 26 Apr. 2021. <https://www.mea.gov.in/vaccine-supply.htm>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

Country	Grants	Commercial	Total
Kenya	1.00	10.20	11.20
Lesotho	0	0.36	0.36
Liberia	0	3.60	3.60
Malawi	0	0.96	0.96
Mali	0	3.96	3.96
Mauritius	1.00	3.00	4.00
Mauritania	0	0.70	0.70
Morocco	0	70.00	70.00
Mozambique	1.00	3.84	4.84
Namibia	0	0.30	0.30
Nigeria	1.00	39.24	40.24
Niger	0.25	3.55	3.80
Papua New Guinea	0	1.32	1.32
Rwanda	0.50	2.40	2.90
Sao Tome and Principe	0	0.24	0.24
Senegal	0.25	3.24	3.49
Seychelles	0.50	0	0.50
Sierra Leone	0	0.96	0.96
Somalia	0	3.00	3.00
South Sudan	0	1.32	1.32
Sudan	0	8.28	8.28
Togo	0	1.56	1.56
Uganda	0	8.64	8.64
Zambia	0	2.28	2.28
Zimbabwe	0.35	0	0.35

TABLE 2.4 INDIA GLOBAL SUPPORT UNDER *VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM* (ASIA, UK, CANADA)
 (COVID-19 VACCINE SUPPLIES IN 100,000)

Country	Grants	Commercial	Total
Afghanistan	5.00	4.68	9.68
Bangladesh	33.00	70.00	103.00
Bhutan	5.50	0	5.50
Maldives	2.00	1.12	3.12
Nepal	11.00	13.48	24.48
Sri Lanka	5.00	7.64	12.64
Cambodia	0	3.24	3.24
Laos	0	1.32	1.32
Myanmar	17.00	20.00	37.00
Bahrain	1.00	0	1.00
Iran	0	1.25	1.25
Kuwait	0	2.00	2.00
Oman	1.00	0	1.00
Palestine	0	0.25	0.25
Saudi Arabia	0	45.00	45.00
Syria	0	2.57	2.57
UAE	0	2.00	2.00
Yemen	0	3.60	3.60
Albania	0.50	0	0.50
Mongolia	1.50	0	1.50
Serbia	0	1.50	1.50
Tajikistan	0	1.92	1.92
Ukraine	0	5.00	5.00
Uzbekistan	0	6.60	6.60

⁴ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 26 Apr. 2021. <https://www.mea.gov.in/vaccine-supply.htm>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

Country	Grants	Commercial	Total
Canada	0	5.00	5.00
UK	0	50.00	50.00
UNO peace- keepers	2.00	0	2.00

TABLE 3.⁵ INDIA GLOBAL SUPPORT UNDER VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM (REST OF WORLD)
(COVID-19 VACCINE SUPPLIES IN 100,000)

Country	Grants	Commercial	Total
Argentina	0	5.80	5.80
Bahamas	0.20	0	0.20
Brazil	0	40.00	40.00
El Salvador	0	0.20	0.20
Guatemala	2.00	0	2.00
Guyana	0.80	0	0.80
Jamaica	0.50	0	0.50
Nicaragua	2.00	1.35	3.35
Suriname	0.50	0	0.50
Bolivia	0	2.28	2.28
Guyana	0.80	0	0.80
Paraguay	1.00	0	1.00
Trinidad and Tobago	0.40	0	0.40
Fiji	1.00	0	1.00
Papua New Guinea	0	1.32	1.32
Solomon Islands	0	0.25	0.25
Nauru	0.10	0	0.10
Barbados	1.00	0	1.00
Belize	0.25	0	0.25
St. Lucia	0.25	0	0.25
St. Kitts and Nevis	0.20	0	0.20

⁵ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 26 Apr. 2021. <https://www.mea.gov.in/vaccine-supply.htm>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

Country	Grants	Commercial	Total
St. Vincent and Grenadines	0.40	0	0.40
Antigua and Barbuda	0.40	0	0.40

India’s assurance of vaccine production and its capacity to deliver capacity to help all humanity in fighting the pandemic is a tribute to the country’s belief that the world is one family. Of India’s efforts to contribute to the fight against Covid-19, Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar addressed the UN General Assembly in September 2020, reporting:

“(The assistance) is not only in keeping with our age-old tradition of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, but to utilize India’s growing capacities for the benefit of humankind. As a prominent nation in an increasingly multi-polar world, the international community has greater expectations of us, and we, in turn, are prepared to demonstrate our willingness to shoulder greater responsibilities. We have never seen a contradiction between this internationalism and the nationalism that endeavors at nation building.”⁶

The global community has been on the receiving end of India’s concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The mobilization to provide such impactful support has been provided without any partiality, and not as a leverage or means to strengthen its trade policy, to realize business expansion or for any other economic agendas; only to fulfill its foreign policy objective of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

Practice of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and the health war

The produced-in-India pharmaceutical products *Covaxin* and *Covishield* have been recognized and used worldwide. As a result, more than six million vaccinations have been gifted to the world community, and India has exported more than 60 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines since January 20 this year;⁷ the

⁶ Jaishankar, Subrahmanyam. “Statement by External Affairs Minister in Rajya Sabha on the Vaccine Maitri Initiative.” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 17 Mar. 2021. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/33653/statement+by+external+affairs+minister+in+rajya+sabha+on+the+vaccine+maitri+initiative>, accessed 20 May 2021.

⁷ *The Hindu*. 20 Mar. 2021.



current objective is to deliver two billion doses to 119 countries by 2021.⁸ Through India's efforts and programs, the global community has been better able to address the pandemic, and the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* has been at play with every vaccine shipment sent, every relief effort provided, every funding contribution offered. Peter Hotez, professor of pediatrics and molecular virology and microbiology at the Baylor College of Medicine in Waco, Texas, has commented, "The rollout of Covid-19 vaccines by India in collaboration with leading global institutions has rescued the world from the deadly Corona virus and the contribution by country must

not be underestimated. The Covid-19 vaccine rollout is India's gift to the world in combating the virus."⁹ In sum, nearly 4 million people have died in the world because of complications of the coronavirus, and India has been an active leader on behalf of the world community to fight this deadly virus.

The second phase of Covid-19 stormed ashore in the month of April 2021 in India, flooding the country's health system like a violent tsunami. Within no time, the number of Covid-19 patients increased from 100,000 to some 400,000 daily, but then decreased to 190,000 every day by the end of May; the world has reciprocated the Indian philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and responded affirmatively to the country's needs, as evidenced in Table 4. Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla has shared that many countries are also responding to his country's healthcare needs because India played a proactive role in providing essential pharmaceutical products and vaccines to the world community in the first phase of pandemic;¹⁰ now reciprocation is seen.

⁸ *The New York Times*. 25 Apr. 2021.

⁹ Hotez, Peter. 10 May 2021. Press Trust of India. Delhi. 10:15 IST.

¹⁰ Shringla, Harsh. "Transcript of Special Briefing by Foreign Secretary on International Cooperation on Covid Pandemic." Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 29 Apr. 2021.

TABLE 4. GLOBAL SUPPORT TO INDIA (2ND PHASE OF COVID-19, APRIL 2021 ONWARDS)

Countries	Vaccination and Pharmaceuticals, Instruments and Other Items
USA	In different, separate shipments: 60 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, PPE kits, therapeutics, ventilators, laboratory tests, 440 oxygen cylinders and regulators, Oxygen-generating equipment, oxygen concentrators, raw material for Covid-19 vaccines, 423 oxygen cylinders with regulators (200 size D, 223 size H), 210 pulse oximeters, 184,000 Abbott Rapid Diagnostic Test Kits, 84,000 N-95 face masks, 17 H-size (large) oxygen cylinders and 700,000 Abbott Rapid Diagnostic Test Kits, 125,000 vials of Remdesivir. ¹¹
USAID	\$23 million USD aid to India, 960,000 rapid diagnostic tests of Covid-19, 100,000 N-95 masks for healthcare workers, thousands of medical oxygen concentrators for 320 primary healthcare facilities, 1,028 Type-H oxygen cylinders (large), 600 Type-H oxygen cylinder regulators, 20 adaptors, 844,800 N-95 masks. ¹²
UK	In different, separate shipments: 120 non-invasive ventilators, 20 manual ventilators, 495 oxygen concentrator devices, 120 oxygen concentrators, 95 oxygen concentrators, 100 ventilators, 280 oxygen concentrators, 40 ventilators, 60 ventilators. ¹³
France	8 oxygen generators, 28 ventilators, 200 electric syringe pumps, 28 AFNOR/BS flexible tubes, 500 anti-bacterial filters, 500 machine filters, 500 related patient circuits. ¹⁴
Germany	24 cryogenic oxygen containers, 120 ventilators. ¹⁵
Italy	1 oxygen generating plant, 20 ventilators (with an installation team onboard). ¹⁶
Ireland	700 units oxygen concentrators, 365 ventilators ¹⁷
Norway	\$2.4 million USD aid to India through Red Cross India. ¹⁸

¹¹ Herman, Steve. "US to Send Oxygen to India." VOA News. 26 Apr. 2021. <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/us-send-oxygen-india>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

¹² "Several countries step up to help India fight against Covid-19." *India Today*. 9 Apr. 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/video/several-countries-step-up-help-india-fight-against-covid-19-1796268-2021-04-29>, accessed 10 Apr. 2021.

¹³ "Covid: Countries send aid to ease India's oxygen emergency." BBC News. 25 Apr. 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56881083>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

¹⁴ "Covid: Countries send aid to ease India's oxygen emergency." BBC. 25 Apr. 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56881083>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

¹⁵ *India Today*. 4 May 2021.

¹⁶ Carswell, Simon, and Sorcha Pollak. "Countries rush to India's aid as Covid cases overwhelm hospitals." *Irish Times*. 26 Apr. 2021. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/countries-rush-to-india-s-aid-as-covid-cases-overwhelm-hospitals-1.4547226>, accessed 15 May 2021.

¹⁷ *The Economic Times*. 3 May 2021.

¹⁸ Carswell, Simon, and Sorcha Pollak. "Countries rush to India's aid as Covid cases overwhelm hospitals." *Irish Times*. 26 Apr. 2021. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/countries-rush-to-india-s-aid-as-covid-cases-overwhelm-hospitals-1.4547226>, accessed 15 May 2021.

Countries	Vaccination and Pharmaceuticals, Instruments and Other Items
Belgium	9,000 vials of Remdesivir. ¹⁹
Luxembourg	58 ventilators. ²⁰
Portugal	5,503 vials of Remdesivir, 20,000 liters of oxygen per week. ²¹
Sweden	120 ventilators, 1 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines (4 to 5 million AstraZeneca vaccines are in waiting). ²²
Denmark	53 ventilators, 1 million Euro to Red Cross India to fight pandemic. ²³
Russia	Sputnik vaccination, oxygen concentrate, 20 tons oxygen concentrators, lung ventilation equipment, monitors, medicines, other essential pharmaceutical, 20 oxygen production plants, ventilators, 200,000 medicine packs ²⁴
Romania	In different, separate shipments: 80 oxygen concentrators, 75 oxygen cylinders, 40 high-flow oxygen therapy equipment. ²⁵
Uzbekistan	100 oxygen concentrators, 2,000 pieces of Remdesivir, 51 oxygen concentrators from Indian Community Association in Uzbekistan. ²⁶
Saudi Arabia	80 metric tons liquid oxygen. ²⁷

¹⁹ “Norway announces \$2.4 million aid towards Covid relief in India.” *India Today*. 29 April 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/story/norway-announces-2-4-million-aid-towards-covid-relief-in-india-1796096-2021-04-29>, accessed 92 Apr. 2021.

²⁰ Schmall, Emily, and Karan Deep Singh. “Amid Second Covid Wave, World Responds to India’s Distress Call.” *The New York Times*. 26 Apr. 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/26/world/asia/india-covid-vaccine-world-response.html>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

²¹ “Oman sends special medical assistance to support India’s fight against Covid-19.” *Times of Oman*. 12 May 2021. <https://timesofoman.com/article/101218-oman-sends-special-medical-assistance-to-support-indias-fight-against-covid-19>, accessed 13 May 2021.

²² *The Economic Times*. 3 May 2021.

²³ “Explained: The current travel rules between India and Germany.” <https://www.thelocal.dk/20210507/explained-the-current-travel-rules-between-india-and-germany-2>, accessed 11 May 2021.

²⁴ “Norway announces \$2.4 million aid towards Covid relief in India.” *India Today*. 29 Apr. 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/story/norway-announces-2-4-million-aid-towards-covid-relief-in-india-1796096-2021-04-29>, accessed 29 Apr. 2021.

²⁵ Associated Press. 1 May 2021.

²⁶ Mohan, Geeta, and Milan Sharma. “Ministries fumble as questions raised on fate of oxygen, foreign aid rushed to Covid-hit India.” 4 May 2021. *India Today*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/story/ministries-fumble-as-questions-raised-on-fate-of-foreign-aid-for-india-1798567-2021-05-04>, accessed 10 May 2021.

²⁷ Schmall, Emily, and Karan Deep Singh. “Amid Second Covid Wave, World Responds to India’s Distress Call.” *The New York Times*. 26 Apr. 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/26/world/asia/india-covid-vaccine-world-response.html>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

Countries	Vaccination and Pharmaceuticals, Instruments and Other Items
UAE	6 cryogenic oxygen containers. ²⁸
Kuwait	282 oxygen cylinders, 60 oxygen concentrators, ventilators, other medical supplies. ²⁹
Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar	Daily shuttling of vehicles of Indian Army, Indian Navy and aircraft of the Indian Air Force to ferry oxygen generators, medical supplies, lab equipment, medical personnel to Covid-19 hotspots from domestic sources and abroad. ³⁰
Oman	30 oxygen concentrators, 100 oxygen cylinders, essential medical supplies of ventilators, SPO2 monitors and medicines. ³¹
Israel	150 oxygen gas and respirators, 3 large oxygen generator plants, 360 oxygen concentrators. ³²
Bhutan	40 metric tons liquid oxygen produced by Motanga Industrial Estate, Longkhar District, Bhutan, to be supplied to Assam in India every day. ³³
Bangladesh	10,000 vials of Remdesivir injection. ³⁴
Singapore	4 cryogenic tanks to be used for transporting oxygen, 7,511 oxygen concentrators, 516 BiPAPs, 256 oxygen cylinders, 8 cryogenic tanks. ³⁵
Hongkong	800 oxygen concentrators, 300 oxygen concentrators. ³⁶
Thailand	15 oxygen concentrators, 15 oxygen concentrators from Indian Community Association, Bangkok. ³⁷

²⁸ “Egypt joins international efforts, sends tons of medical aid to India to face coronavirus outbreak.” *Egypt Today*. 1 May 2021. <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/101511/Egypt-joins-international-efforts-sends-tons-of-medical-aid-to>, accessed 11 May 2021.

²⁹ “Norway announces \$2.4 million aid towards Covid relief in India.” *India Today*. 29 Apr. 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/story/norway-announces-2-4-million-aid-towards-covid-relief-in-india-1796096-2021-04-29>, accessed 29 Apr. 2021.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ “Oman sends special medical assistance to support India’s fight against Covid-19.” *Times of Oman*. 12 May 2021. <https://timesofoman.com/article/101218-oman-sends-special-medical-assistance-to-support-indias-fight-against-covid-19>, accessed 13 May 2021.

³² “Israel to send life-saving medical equipment to India amid Covid-19 crisis.” *India News*. 4 May 2021.

³³ *The Economic Times*. 3 May 2021.

³⁴ “Covid: Countries send aid to ease India’s oxygen emergency.” BBC. 25 Apr. 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56881083>, accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

³⁵ Press Trust of India. 24 April 2021.

³⁶ Haidair, Suhasini, and Dinakar Peri. “Coronavirus: India expects supplies from about 15 countries.” *The Hindu*. 29 April 2021. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-india-expects-supplies-from-about-15-countries-oxygen-containers-medicines-expected-this-week/article34416171.ece>, accessed 30 Apr. 2021.

³⁷ Mohan, Geeta, and Milan Sharma. 4 May 2021. Ministries fumble as questions raised on fate of oxygen, foreign aid rushed to Covid-hit India. *India Today*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/story/ministries-fumble-as-questions-raised-on-fate-of-foreign-aid-for-india-1798567-2021-05-04>: accessed on 10 May 2021.

Countries	Vaccination and Pharmaceuticals, Instruments and Other Items
South Korea	300 oxygen concentrators and diagnostic kits. ³⁸
Japan	50 million USD to India assistance, 300 respirators, 400 oxygen concentrators. ³⁹
Egypt	300 oxygen cylinders, 50 oxygen concentrators, 8,000 Remdesivir vials, 30 defibrillators shock, 20 electrocardiograms, 20 ventilators, 100 patient beds, 50 syringe pumps, 50 infusion pumps. ⁴⁰
Mauritius	200 oxygen concentrators. ⁴¹
Australia	Medicines, oxygen supplies, non-invasive ventilators, PPE kits. ⁴²
New Zealand	1 million NZ dollars (about USD 720,365) to Red Cross India. ⁴³

Domestically in India, all the three wings of the country’s armed forces as evidenced in Table 5, and Indian Railways, operator of the nation’s railway system, have successfully deployed, subject to the control of the central government as per the Constitution of India.⁴⁴ This launch of these entities has had a meaningful impact on the fulfillment of the medical needs of Covid-19 patients in different parts of India. And, the Indian Navy operation, *Samudra Setu*, or “Sea Bridge,” has successfully repatriated back to India around 4,000 citizens stranded in neighbouring countries amidst the Covid-19 outbreak last year.⁴⁵ Additionally,

³⁸ Associated Press. 1 May 2021.

³⁹ Murakami, Sakura. “Japan prepared to provide 300 respirators to India.” Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/japan-prepared-provide-300-respirators-india-2021-04-30/>, accessed 13 May 2021.

⁴⁰ “Egypt joins international efforts, sends tons of medical aid to India to face coronavirus outbreak.” *Egypt Today*. 1 May 2021. <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/101511/Egypt-joins-international-efforts-sends-tons-of-medical-aid-to>, accessed 11 May 2021.

⁴¹ Mohan, Geeta, and Milan Sharma. “Ministries fumble as questions raised on fate of oxygen, foreign aid rushed to Covid-hit India.” 4 May 2021. *India Today*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/story/ministries-fumble-as-questions-raised-on-fate-of-foreign-aid-for-india-1798567-2021-05-04>, accessed 10 May 2021.

⁴² “Global community rushes financial, medical assistance to India to combat Covid surge.” *India Today*. 29 Apr. 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/global-community-rushes-financial-medical-assistance-in-india-combat-covid-surge-1796094-2021-04-29>, accessed 5 May 2021.

⁴³ “Norway announces \$2.4 million aid towards Covid relief in India.” *India Today*. 29 April 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/coronavirus-outbreak/story/norway-announces-2-4-million-aid-towards-covid-relief-in-india-1796096-2021-04-29>, accessed 29 Apr. 2021.

⁴⁴ Union List. 2021. The Constitution of India. Publication Divisions. Government of India.

⁴⁵ “Seven Indian Navy Ships Deployed for Op Samudra Setu II.” Indian Navy. 6 May 2021. <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/seven-indian-navy-ships-deployed-op-samudra-setu-ii>, accessed 12 May 2021.

Operation *Samudra Setu* actively participated in fulfilling the requirement of medical oxygen and deployed medical officers, nurses, paramedics and support staff to the different parts of the country during this second wave of pandemic (Table 5).

TABLE 5. COVID-19 AND INDIAN MILITARY ACTION IN 2021

<p>1. Action of Air Force</p> <p>24 April (Chinook Helicopter, C-17, An32 transport aircrafts of Indian Air Force actions)⁴⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brought 4 empty cryogenic oxygen containers from Singapore to Panagarh air base in India. • Loaded 2 empty cryogenic oxygen containers in the two rounds from Pune to Jamnagar. • Transported 2 empty cryogenic oxygen containers from Jamnagar to Jodhpur. • Covid-19 testing equipment from Jammu to Leh. • Covid-19 testing equipment from Jammu to Kargil. <p>08 May (C-17 and IL-76 transport aircrafts action)⁴⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airlifted oxygen tankers in Agra, Baroda, Begumpet, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Dimapur, Gwalior, Hindan, Indore, Jamnagar, Jodhpur, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Panagarh, Pune, Raipur, Ranchi, Surat, Udaipur, Vijaywada. • Airlifted containers, cryogenic oxygen tanks, oxygen generators, ventilators and cylinders from Singapore, Dubai, Bangkok, UK, Germany, Belgium, Australia, Ventilators, Israel. <p>11 May (C-17 transport aircrafts action)⁴⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airlifted medical supplies from Frankfurt, Germany.
<p>2. Action of INS (Indian Naval Ship) Navy</p>

⁴⁶ “Indian Air Force continues its efforts towards Covid 19 relief.” Indian Air Force. 24 Apr. 2021.” <https://indianairforce.nic.in/content/covid-19-relief-efforts-indian-air-force>, accessed 11 May 2021.

<p>02 May (INS Tabar, INS Trikand, INS Jalashwa, INS Airavat — Operation Samudra Setu II)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brought 40 MT liquid medical oxygen-filled cryogenic containers from Manama, Bahrain. • Brought liquid oxygen tanks and medical supplies from Doh, Qatar and Kuwait. <p>05 May (INS Talwar, INS Kolkata, INS Jalashwa, INS Shardul, INS Airavat — Operation Samudra Setu II)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brought two 27-ton liquid oxygen tanks from Bahrain. • Brought two 27-ton oxygen tanks, 400 oxygen cylinders and 47 concentrators from Kuwait. • Four warships brought nine 27-ton oxygen tanks and more than 1,500 oxygen cylinders from Qatar and Kuwait. • Brought 3,600 cylinders, eight 27-ton (216 tons) oxygen tanks, 10,000 rapid antigen detection test kits and seven concentrators from Singapore. • Brought three oxygen-filled cryogenic containers from Persian Gulf. <p>07 May (Navy doctors for public)⁴⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional deployment of medical officers, nurses, paramedics and support staff at PM Cares Hospital in Dhanvantari, Ahmedabad.
<p>10 May (Navy hospital for public)⁴⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50-bed Covid-19 Care Centre established by Indian Navy in Khurda district in Odisha. <p>11 May (INS Kolkata, INS Trikand, INS Airavat — Operation Samudra Setu II)⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brought liquid medical oxygen and critical medical equipment from Singapore, Kuwait and Qatar.
<p>3. Action of Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO)⁴⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Covid-19 hospitals in different parts of the country. • Anti-Covid-19 drug like glucose developed after affirmative clinical trial results 11 May 2021. Aids faster recovery of hospitalized patients, reduces supplementary oxygen dependence.
<p>4. Action of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)⁶</p> <p>24 April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment including bio-safety cabinets, centrifuges and stabilizers produced by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) given to Union Territory of Ladakh to enhance testing.

But, while the government action of connecting its armed forces to civilians to address emergency needs in this pandemic is appreciated by the world community, opposition political parties in India have expressed their outrage, claiming the government's mobilization to fight the pandemic will compromise

⁴⁷ "Additional Deployment of Naval Personnel from WNC for PM Care Covid Hospital Dhanvantari, Ahmedabad." Indian Navy. <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/additional-deployment-naval-personnel-wnc-pm-care-covid-hospital-dhanvantari-ahmedabad>, accessed 7 May 2021.

⁴⁸ "Indian Naval Ships Airavat, Kolkata and Trikand Reach India with Liquid Medical Oxygen and Critical Medical from Singapore, Kuwait and Qatar." Indian Navy. <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/indian-naval-ships-airavat-kolkata-and-trikand-reach-india-liquid-medical-oxygen-and>, accessed 11 May 2021.

⁴⁹ "All you need to know about DRDO's new anti-Covid-19 drug 2-DG." *Business Today* (India). 10 May 2021. <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/trends/all-you-need-to-know-about-drdos-new-anti-covid-19-drug-2-dg/story/438692.html>, accessed 12 May 2021.

national security at international borders. Even though the health war against the pandemic has been continuing successfully, opposing parties have different perceptions, based on their political ideologies and beliefs. Despite its self-sufficient, no-foreign-aid policy eschewing the charity of other nations since 2004, the government responded affirmatively to the world call, creating programs, calling on agencies for special support, easing restriction to address vital needs and desperate circumstances, and more — all efforts aimed at saving lives during the second phase of pandemic.

It wasn't enough, and criticism from opposition parties was directed at most of these efforts to manage the pandemic's spread. These political naysayers — at the national level, within the 28 states and across eight union territories raised their objections at each step, at each action that was taken against the pandemic by the Indian government.

Health war and political parties

The subject of health comes under the State List, one of three lists in the legislative section of the Constitution of India. Each of the states has a constitutional responsibility to public health management. People elect their constitutional representatives serving as chief ministers belonging to either national parties or regional parties. The responsibility of each state's government is to ensure and manage improvements in the local public health capacity, from district to village levels. Ten states have regional party chief ministers, four states have Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, a major Indian political party) leaders, and 14 states have coalition governments with BJP. Three Indian states have Indian National Congress (INC, or "Congress," a rival party to BJP) representatives, and three have coalition governments with Congress.

The 17th Parliament of India was formed in the year 2019. While BJP increased its majority in the body, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a right-wing political alliance led by BJP, garnered the most votes in a five-week, seven-phase election that attracted a record 912 million voters, including an all-time turnout of female balloteers. Other parties receiving Parliament seats included INC, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA, a coalition of predominately center-left political parties) and a number of other smaller parties. Since the Parliament

elections, the central government has resolved the pending issues mentioned in its election manifesto, such as the abolition of the 1954 Article 370, thereby designating the single state of Jammu and Kashmir as two reorganized union territories, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, and the Union Territory of Ladakh. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was created in 2019 to supersede its 1955 predecessor and create a path toward Indian citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis or Christians, and arrived in India before the end of December 2014. And, an emotional, impassioned debate has developed in India with the government's actions on the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), a nexus of sorts that deals with census, demographic and citizen-status data and addresses the sticky issue of the status of illegal migrants in India. Inter-related, yet separate and apart for each other, the CAA, NPR and NCR have become a political cricket ball being willowed about from one side to the other. Yet, the debate over headcounts, demographics and citizenship may be a moot point, says Abhinav Prakash Singh, an assistant professor of economics at the University of Delhi. The Indian economist relates:

"Covid-19 settles the debate on the NPR and NRC by demonstrating the necessity for a complete and verifiable database of population and citizens, as even now many people are outside the ambit of [the] Covid-19 pandemic relief measure due to the lack of such a database. Such a database and State capacity of need-based surveillance, unshackled by strict privacy concerns, are central to the success of countries like South Korea, Taiwan, China, and Singapore in containing the pandemic."⁵⁰

The Pandora's box keeping such decade-old conflicts belongs to opposition parties, but it has lost its significance with the resolution of these pending issues by the Center government *before* the arrival of Covid-19 in India. India's current political opposition being anarchist in nature, this pandemic came as a rescue idea for UPA-allied national and regional parties. The UPA in the different states has fabricated propaganda and has not focused on the pandemic alarm. The

⁵⁰ Singh, Prakash Abhinav. "Modi 1.0 will help Modi 2.0 deal with the pandemic." 30 Mar. 2020. *The Hindustan Times*. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/modi-1-0-will-help-modi-2-0-deal-with-the-pandemic-opinion/story-CePuKWzH5WwKcx9Teb8LOK.html>, accessed 5 May 2021.

Central government has worked to provide much-needed relief measures, but UPA allies have acted destructively and are continuously opposing the national government's efforts on pandemic management — this should be a grave concern for Indian polity itself. As a result, opposition parties are therefore, constrained to be constructive rather than perpetually anarchist in orientation; in other words, the parties cannot appreciate the decisions being made on behalf of the people's welfare; they are constrained because of their ideological opposition to BJP. Today, it seems appropriate to consider what might be described as informal modes of opposition.

It is a question of survival, and a concerted effort to make their presence felt at the national level, that this informal mode of opposition parties has articulated its strength at each one's different ruling state levels. The opposition political parties ruling in the different states in India (such as Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal) neither understood the gravity of the situation, creating anarchic conditions for the migrating workers, nor implemented national government pandemic-driven policies for the people in the year 2020 and ongoing 2021.

The Indian government defined social distancing as a non-pharmaceutical, infection-prevention practice to decrease the morbidity and mortality due to disease. Being the second most populous country in the world, the government had to engage and inform all the people about the gravity of the pandemic situation, while also involving them in lockdown participation in the fight against this contagious disease. Millions of people in India responded well to the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and, in doing so, the people may have experienced a sort of psychotherapeutic lift during the tough time.

Likewise, the people of different countries have responded to similar calls for supportive participation by their elected leaders during the pandemic. In India, all the opposition parties have denied the existence of pandemic in 2020 and have criticized what they believe to be the government's failure to develop policies. In one instance, in response to the government's announced intentions to conduct a dry-run inoculation exercise, one opposition leader said:

“Covid-19 is only for the opposition, so that we are unable to do anything. I will not get the vaccine now. I am telling you about myself. Am I going to trust a vaccine given by the BJP? Oh, get lost.”⁵¹

Being informal in nature, all the opposition parties had built their teams of rumormongers by using different statements in generating opinion against the government’s hard work. But, says India’s *Economic Times*, the work was significant:

“India went into a war mode, with government efforts to combat the pandemic being led by ‘corona warriors’ who donned white lab coats, PPE kits in hospitals and ambulances, and khaki in the streets as police personnel worked day and night to ensure the compliance of lockdown ... India practiced social distancing on a never-before scale that kept the country’s 1.3 billion population indoors all day and delivered more than a few fringe benefits.”⁵²

The opposition parties had grabbed India’s lockdown as an opportunity, and the drum-beat of ill will began with the criticism of the idea of social distancing and the masking of common people as a solution, as well as the dismissal of the government’s overall response to the pandemic. “This was completely avoidable. We had time to prepare. We should have taken this threat much more seriously and have been much better prepared,”⁵³ noted Rahul Gandhi, a Parliamentarian and former president of INC.

In the early stages of the pandemic, the world community had no medical support — no testing mechanism, no vaccine — so, instead initiated lockdowns as a preventive measure. Virologists associated with different research institutions

⁵¹ Rehman, Asad. “Won’t take ‘BJP vaccine,’ says Akhilesh Yadav; attracts flak. *Indian Express*. 3 January 2021. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/akhilesh-yadav-coronavirus-vaccine-bjp-7130434/>, accessed on 13 May 2021.

⁵² “One year since a complete lockdown was announced, we look back on how India fought COVID.” *The Economic Times of India*. 24 Mar. 2021. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/one-year-since-a-complete-lockdown-was-announced-we-look-back-on-how-india-fought-covid/first-lockdown-announced/slide-show/81662838.cms>, accessed 25 May 2021.

⁵³ Gandhi, Rahul. “We had time to prepare, this is sad, says Rahul Gandhi as coronavirus cases cross 500 in India.” *India Today*. 24 Mar. 2020. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/we-had-time-to-prepare-this-is-sad-ra-hul-gandhi-on-coronavirus-in-india-1659061-2020-03-24>, accessed 15 May 2021.

began investigating Covid-19 characteristics worldwide, working tirelessly to discover any solution.

The informal mode of opposition parties in India started campaigning against the nation's lockdown on the pretext of its negative impact upon the working class, peasantry, rural and urban poor. But these doom-and-gloom government opponents, unfortunately, had not planned any alternatives; even vague ideas about or proposals for material and financial support were a long time coming. Rather than criticism without solution, it was social service organizations, religious communities (Sikh and Hindu temples), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, a volunteer organization that has provided services including masks, soaps and food to many across India during pandemic lockdowns) and thousands of welfare societies that came forward to assist in the effort to quell the spread of the virus.

The selfless individual efforts of film personalities, entrepreneurs and industrialists provided food, arranged for bus transportation for members of the working class, supported the distribution of free masks, and assisted medical facilities for months together in India. It is important to note here that the Sikh temples, in different countries around the world — in Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, Africa and Asia — provided kitchen facilities and medical support to thousands of people during the pandemic period. The New York Times noted, “The Gurudwara [a Sikh place of worship] has served 145,000 free meals for New York hospitals workers, people in poverty and anyone else in search of hot meal ... [and] the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India, serves more than 100,000 people every day.”⁵⁴ *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana*, or “The Prime Minister’s People’s Wealth Scheme,” (an affordable-access financial-services program for citizens) and other central government policies, along with the concerted efforts of service organization and other entities, worked together in the first and second phase of Covid-19 in India.

⁵⁴ Krishna, Priya “How to Feed Crowds in a Protest or Pandemic? The Sikhs Know.” *The New York Times*. 8 June 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/08/dining/free-food-sikh-gurdwara-langar.html>, accessed 10 June 2021.

Political parties and vaccination program

India's vast experiences in its 1985-launched Universal Immunization Program have been brought into play in the battle against the pandemic. Lessons learned over three-plus decades have helped in the conducting of successful dry-run exercises and the testing of the Covid-19 vaccination process at ground level. The program, which today provides a dozen disease vaccinations, is actively supported by a long list of outlets: 10,000-plus participating private hospitals, 600 Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS, the Indian healthcare carrier for state employees) providers, thousands of government dispensaries, a like number of Primary Health Centers (PHCs), hundreds of civil hospitals at the district level



and Anganwadi rural child care centers. This army of support facilities, agencies and outlets has been instrumental in carrying out the vaccinations of more than 2.5 million⁵⁵ people of all groups from 18 years to 100 years of age across the world's seventh-largest country by area.

The opposition voice of misinformation continues. This informal mode of opposition parties bombarding the Indian population with fake statements against the national vaccination drive advances anarchism in society and builds chaos across its targeted space. Different opposition parties' leaders have tried their best to label these Indian vaccinations as the "BJP vaccine"; efforts seek to create skepticism and mistrust toward the vaccine;⁵⁶ the reliability of the vaccine has been brought into question and exaggerated;⁵⁷ and other half-truths have been spread to discourage Indians from being vaccinated.

Interviews with farmers in rural India, with industrial workers in different big cities and with people living in the slums of metropolitan cities have revealed

⁵⁵ Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. 25 May 2021. <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/>, accessed 13 June 2021.

⁵⁶ *The Economic Times*. 2 Jan. 2021.

⁵⁷ *The Times of India*. 9 Jan. 2021.

that many people are refusing to take the vaccination because of the propaganda spread by opposing parties. Representative of the success of the campaign and the fear bred in its audience is the idea that “It will kill us, and opposition leaders are also not getting vaccinated, then why we?”⁵⁸ The opposition parties have used social media outlets such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, orkut, newj, vido, KineMaster, Biugo, Vivo, Moj and others as tools to pronounce and strengthened their arguments against the government’s reliance on the vaccination as a means of managing the spread of the pandemic and reducing the daily cases and deaths attributed to it.

Programs introduced by the state governments that promise free food grains for proof of vaccine have been less successful than anticipated; the actions, and in many cases the interference, of government opposition have played a damaging and retarding role in the programs’ promise. Among the intimidating tactics that have proven successful are physical attacks on doctors’ teams; witnessing such altercations, many villagers have chosen to leave their homes rather than be vaccinated. Further, opposition fake-news ploys have included spreading the rumor that the vaccine will make men impotent and unable to produce families — a particularly effective message in Muslim- and Christian-dominated areas. Perhaps these tactics have been borrowed from a previous campaign: In 2007, Pakistani clerics opposed to the government’s polio vaccination program used male impotency as an argument against it, broadcasting on an illegal FM channel that the effort to vaccinate was “a conspiracy of the Jews and Christians to stunt the population growth of Muslims.” The BBC News report goes on to note: “A WHO report for 2006 said 66 localities in these areas were not covered by the immunization staff due to logistical problems, and coverage in 320 localities was ‘poor’ because of the anti-vaccine propaganda.”⁵⁹

In sum, the spread of misinformation is as difficult a challenge to beat as the pandemic itself. The emotional and anarchic card against the Covid-19 vaccination has been playing profusely in India, and as a result, the desired result

⁵⁸ India TV. 20 May 2021. “Aaj Ki Baat” program broadcasted at 1900 Hour.

⁵⁹ Yusufzai, Ashfaq. “Impotence fears hit polio drive.” BBC News. 25 Jan. 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6299325.stm, accessed 17 June 2021.

of the first phase of vaccination was not realized. In the government opposition's campaign, about 10 million healthcare workers and 20 million frontline workers were targeted, along with 270 million people aged 50 years and younger with comorbidities.⁶⁰ Sadly, just 60 percent of healthcare workers and only 26.3 percent frontline workers have received the vaccine, as of March 2021.⁶¹ At the same time, India has administered 30.6 million people the first dose of the vaccine.⁶² This is the result of the ideological intoxication of the opposition parties that have created the anarchy even in the minds of the healthcare workers and frontline workers about the success rate of the Covid-19 vaccine.

This mind-poisoning propaganda has made thousands of vaccine jabs wasted, as people have not turned out, despite the counter arguments of directors, chief medical officers and renowned senior medical practitioners of top-most hospitals. Also, to counter claims that the Covaxine and Covishield vaccines can be life-threatening, Prime Minister Modi, along with different cabinet ministers, BJP ruling state chief ministers and their cabinet ministers; Indian Army, Air Force and Navy generals; and other scientists have publicly lined up for their vaccinations, leading by example to the Indian people. Meanwhile, conversely, opposition party leaders, including UPA allies, chief ministers in states and other party associates have neither supported nor endorsed governmental mass awareness vaccine campaigns, nor have they allowed media outlets to share information and images of their vaccinations — at least those who choose to vaccinate.

The vast mass of less-educated people living in rural or semi-urban areas in India are more vulnerable to rumor and innuendo and more likely to hear and digest

In sum, the spread of misinformation is as difficult a challenge to beat as the pandemic itself.

⁶⁰ *Gulf News*. 1 Jan. 2021.

⁶¹ Sharma, Neetu Chandra. "Over 60% healthcare workers receive first dose of Covid-19 vaccine." *Mint*. 16 Feb. 2021. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/over-60-healthcare-workers-receive-first-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine-11613488879136.html>, accessed 8 May 2021.

⁶² Vinaykumar, Rai, and Mudit Kapoor. "Covid-19 vaccination: At current rate, India will take 10.8 years to vaccinate 70% population." *Business Today*. 18 Mar. 2021. <https://www.businesstoday.in/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccination-current-rate-india-take-12-years-vaccinate-70pc-population/story/433737.html>, accessed 19 May 2021.

messages of pending doom, such as the opposition's messaging against the impact of the Covid-19 vaccines. Today, such negative advertising has reached these villages — and not accidentally, but as a specifically targeted high-value base — whose demographics are representative of the basic unit of third-tier federalism of India. It is this rural-villages tier, made up of self-governing, politically diverse *Panchayat raj*, or councils, that is showing the effects of the opposition's successful messaging. It is difficult, however, to pinpoint the exact impact — countless Covid-19 cases and deaths that occur in these outlying villages and settlements are not recorded as Covid-related.

And while the opposition parties line up to counter the government's efforts in *Panchayat raj* villages, their tactics have not been strictly psychological; there are signs of physical interference, different from the harassment of medical teams. Following the first phase of the pandemic, the PM Cares fund (Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund) distributed thousands of medical ventilators to the opposition political parties' ruling states such as Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal. However, the machines went unused during the second phase of the pandemic.

The opposition's anarchic ideological intoxication and physical interference are far more dangerous for the country than the pandemic itself. The "Anarchy with Pandemic" has become the action program of the opposition parties, and the number of Covid-19 patients in India has reached more than 30 million. The massive advertisement of opposition parties' two-word slogans — "Modi Vaccine," "BJP Vaccine," "Conspiracy Vaccine" and "Killer Vaccine" are some of the nametags placed by political naysayers — must stop immediately, or else we risk an international perception of India as a worse-case victim, not of Covid-19, but of fictitious stories and figment-of-the-imagination beliefs.

The anarchic tendencies expressed by opposition party leaders become more profound because of their reluctance to be vaccinated with one or the other of the Astra Zeneca potions. Asks one internet headline, "Why has Rahul Gandhi not yet

taken vaccine?”⁶³ With such a platform provided the government for a response to Gandhi’s unvaccinated status, BJP member Ravi Shankar Prasad seized the opportunity: He called Gandhi “arrogant,” “ignorant” and a failed part-time politician, adding, “India is not facing vaccine starvation but Shri Gandhi is facing attention starvation. Why has Rahul Gandhi not yet taken vaccine? Is it an oversight or he doesn’t want it or has he already taken one in many of his undisclosed trips to foreign locations but doesn’t want to disclose?”⁶⁴

The cat-and-mouse, back-and-forth game was extended when Gandhi responded in a letter to the prime minister, stating, “India is home to one out of every six human beings on the planet. The pandemic has demonstrated that our size, genetic diversity and complexity make India fertile ground for the virus to rapidly mutate, transforming itself into a more contagious and more dangerous form. The double and triple mutant strains that we are currently grappling with are only the beginning, I fear.” He continued: “Allowing the uncontrollable spread of this virus in our country will be devastating not only for our people but also for the rest of the world.”⁶⁵ But, it begs the original question: Why hasn’t Gandhi, or others in political and service leadership not supported the ruling government and taken their vaccinations?

Recently, twelve opposition political party leaders wrote a letter to Prime Minister Modi, claiming the pandemic has turned into an “apocalyptic human tragedy” in the country. The leaders demanded universal free vaccination for all, as well as a demand for the repeal of the Indian Agriculture Act of 2020 and the withdrawal of the three laws which deregulate the sale of farmers’ crops⁶⁶ — these would appear to be contradicting calls, one focused on the implementation of a free vaccination program, the other playing on the impassioned and even violent protests of farmers and unions for better market conditions; the vaccination vs.

⁶³ “Statement of Sh. Sarad Pawar and Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad.” Press Trust of India. 9 Apr. 2021.

⁶⁴ Ghosh, Deepshikha. “Why Has Rahul Gandhi Not Yet Taken Covid Vaccine?’: BJP Hits Back.” NDTV. 9 Apr. 2021. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/why-has-rahul-gandhi-not-yet-taken-covid-19-vaccine-bjp-hits-back-2410036>, accessed 17 June 2021.

⁶⁵ Gandhi, Rahul. “Letter to PM.” Indian National Congress. 7 May 2021. <https://www.inc.in/media/press-releases/shri-rahul-gandhi-s-letter-to-the-prime-minister-1>, accessed on 8 May 2021.

⁶⁶ *The Economic Times*. 13 May 2021.

volatility elements at play here are another action by the opposition to breed anarchy through instability.

There's more that opponents of the current Indian central government are doing to upset the socio-political cart. The "Congress toolkit controversy" is one such example, the ruling BJP accusing rival INC of "creating a 'tool kit' that aims to tarnish the image of the country and Prime Minister Narendra Modi by calling the new strain of coronavirus as "Indian strain" or the "Modi strain."⁶⁷ At the center of the fray is the idea of a tool kit that is shared among like audiences as a guideline or guidelines to shape narrative, to gain favor, to successfully influence and more (tool kit pointers: "amplify our work," "create a social media team," "collaborate with friendly media," "liaise with local leaders for special considerations," "respond to help requests only if from members," "prioritize media requests," "contrast work done by us with lack of work done by them").

The anarchic philosophy of the opposition, and an example of the impact of such a toolkit, can be seen in India during the 2021 West Bengal State legislative assembly elections. The INC, the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of Marxist, and other radical political organizations silently diverted their votes in favor of Trinamool Congress—only to halt the ruling BJP juggernaut without any common election manifestos or understanding. With the chaotic combination victory, and subsequent blocking of BJP success, more than 11,000 people have been rendered homeless in the region, 40,000 or more have suffered brutal attacks and more than 2,000 people have become refugees in neighboring states as a post poll result.⁶⁸ Such anarchism will not work in fighting against the pandemic, but it has a disturbing impact upon the country's economy and society.

Pandemic economy and Indian society

The Indian government's actions in the first-phase fight against the pandemic has been critically examined by such international financial-services juggernauts

⁶⁷ "What is 'Congress toolkit' controversy: All you need to know." *The Times of India*. 19 May 2021. <https://time-sofindia.indiatimes.com/india/what-is-the-congress-toolkit-controversy-all-you-need-to-know/article-show/82761578.cms>, accessed 17 June 2021.

⁶⁸ "Brutal Attacks on Hindu Community." Press Trust of India. 20 May 2021.

as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Moody's Investor Service. The consensus is that the steps undertaken in the first phase were well-received, and that the country's economy is expected to rise. Strengthening mechanisms are many as the country looks forward. Pandemic relief measures at the forefront include the provision of medical insurance to frontline health workers and income support extended to vulnerable groups using Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), India's own system of subsidy-transfer directly to the people through their bank accounts are the major pandemic relief measures and the affirmative action of implementation of *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana*, or Prime Minister's Lighting Scheme, increasing liquid petroleum gas cylinder coverage and free cylinder delivery during the pandemic period, which helped provide some 80 million people still using coal or wood access to cleaner cooking fuels. Born of the "Digital India" initiative, Digilocker is a document-storage program placing all educational, medical, passport and PAN card details of every Indian in a digital form over a cloud storage system so they can access them from anywhere without having to carry all the documents physically.

Another Digital India entry, BharatNet, has expanded broadband connectivity and improved telecommunications, while the government's continued advancement in integrating governance and social media has improved communication opportunities across the world's second most populous country. Construction of 1.8 crore houses (18 million) and a vast expansion of electrification have changed lives and lifestyles among India's underserved population. And, the *Ayushman Bharat Yojana* national health insurance program is designed to offer free access to healthcare for low-income earners, similar to the U.S. Medicaid program.

All of the above initiatives, programs and advancements have strengthened Indian society and positively impacted the country's ability to address the pandemic. Says economics Assistant Professor Singh:

"The massive infrastructure built by implementing policies would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Today, India's banked population is more than 80 percent, a sharp increase from around 50 percent in 2014 and now boasts of 380 million bank accounts, 1.25 billion Aadhaar [identity] cards and 1.21 billion mobile phones, more than 600 million RuPay [credit] cards attached to associated [government financial services] accounts, and 1.2 billion transactions are being done over [Indian mobile payment

app] BHIM UPI alone, which accounts only for the 5 percent market share in the burgeoning UPI ecosystem. Because of this, India today is in a far better position to deal with the pandemic.”⁶⁹

The peak of Covid-19 cases and deaths in the year 2020, and the subsequent decline in each category has been examined and systematically analyzed and found the steps taken by the government lend promise to “gradual improvement in economic activity.” Notes Moody’s:

“India’s economy had the biggest contraction, 24 percent year-over-year in the second quarter, because of a long and strict nationwide lockdown. Restrictions have eased only slowly and in phases, and localized restrictions in containment zones remain. As a result, the recovery has been patchy. We therefore forecast a gradual improvement in economic activity over the coming quarters. However, slow credit intermediation will hamper the pace of recovery because of an already weakened financial sector.”⁷⁰

The subsequent second phase of Covid-19 has devastated the Indian society and disturbed the supply chain of medicinal pharmaceuticals and the availability of other essential instruments and the supply of medical support in April 2021. This new wave has defined the economic development parameters and national security concerns about demand–procurement–distribution–supply efficiencies relative to hospitals and pharmacies. The emphasis of central and state governments to shore up domestic production capacities is designed to reduce redundancies. Moody’s continues its analysis: “Pandemic management would continue to improve over time, thereby reducing the fear of the contagion and allowing a steady normalization of social and economic activity. As a result, the Covid-19 virus is expected to become a less-important macroeconomic concern throughout 2021 and 2022.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Singh Prakash Abhinav. “Modi 1.0 will help Modi 2.0 deal with the pandemic.” *The Hindustan Times*. 30 Mar. 2020.

⁷⁰ “Moody’s revises India’s 2020 gdp forecast to –8.9% from –9.6%.” *The Hindu*. 12 Nov. 2020. <https://www.the-hindu.com/business/Economy/moodys-revises-indias-2020-gdp-forecast-to-89-from-96/article33082321.ece>, accessed 7 May 2021.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

No national lockdown in India was imposed in the second wave of Covid-19, and it helped the poor, the vulnerable household, the labor force and the agricultural worker in the unorganized sector find the necessary ways to earn a living and manage their homes. That all the indicators of economic development are improving, despite the changing landscape carved by the devastating pandemic, is a sign of affirmative growth rate. The agricultural labor force, non-farm labor force and small- and medium-sized entrepreneurial enterprises are working either at full capacity or at partial load are the affirmative indicators of economic growth.

This second pandemic wave did not chase the labor force to emigrate to their hometown despite some migration being recorded. The pandemic is under control in the big cities and district headquarters, but it is rising in the villages at an alarming speed. The government must act now to reach out to the country's rural villages, communicating, informing and assisting to provide all the necessary tools to minimize the Covid-19 impact on the one hand, while also bolstering the locales' economies.

Conclusion

Today, the UPA allies have been caught in a classic squeeze as the central government is working to minimize the social impact of the pandemic. At the same time positive and effective governance is critical, Socialist, Communist, militant Naxalite and other opposition elements have turned to devastating tactics designed to create anarchy and chaos as a means of slowing or stopping the forward progress being experienced as a result of BJP-NDA leadership.

The call by the current government for national unity may work in this pandemic situation via a coalition government at the national level, but the people have given the complete majority to the BJP-led NDA for the 17th Parliament of India. Moreover, the ideological differences between the UPA and NDA will not make it conceivable to work in an environment of national unity under the present circumstances.

Overall, Parliamentary democracy never works as an absolute mechanism; the ruling party has a relatively greater number of seats and a larger percentage of the

popular vote than does the opposition. People aligned with a political party believe in their ideas about society and state. With a 1.34-billion population in India, 50/50 or 60/40 percentage splits in support create complex political challenges. This pandemic, for many a horrible, debilitating once-in-a-lifetime experience, should be the common concern for all the political parties in India; no 50/50 or 60/40 or even 70/30 split. The opposition parties must act now. They must step back from their biased and often untrue messaging and anti-vaccination propaganda. It is time for the leaders of the opposition parties to step up, embrace the promise of the vaccine as a best-chance scientific medical tool, get their jabs and support the current government's efforts in the fight against Covid.

It is true to say that once the opposition parties' leaders are vaccinated, falling in line with science and medicine, the campaign against vaccination will die its own death. Once this happens, we will feel the difference and the increased participation in India's vaccination program. It will help to minimize the impact of a third wave of Covid-19 on Indian society. Economically, the GDP of India will depend upon the success rate of vaccination and its campaign to inoculate the population. Even the World Bank suggests that "making the right investments now is vital both to support the recovery when it is urgently needed and foster resilience. Our response to the pandemic crisis today will shape our common future for years to come."⁷² All the political parties should forget their petty interests, understand and recognize the pandemic as a national disease. By acting affirmatively, all can curb its impact and help the country build a durable, equitable and sustainable economy.

All the ruling parties in India and all the opposition parties in India should forget their left, right, conservative or liberal ideologies and should stand united in this national health war. This is the unspoken truth of a multi-party democratic system — to stand together at the time of any emergency.

This paper concludes with a Sanskrit verse, the simple translation — "The truth is one, sages call it by different names" — is taken from the original collection of

⁷² "A Strong but Uneven Recovery." World Bank. 7 May 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects>, accessed 7 May 2021.

Vaidik Sanskrit hymns: “To what is one, sages give many a title.”⁷³ In other words, the truth is one, but the learned refer to it with different names. The truth prevails that India is a nation, and we should stand united behind the nation in fighting against Covid-19 pandemic. The democratic system allows checks and balances in the examination of the function of the ruling party governance; the system also allows the same for opposing voices. But, at a time of emergency, standing together as one family — *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* — is the only solution.

About the author

Suresh Kumar is a professor in the Department of African Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of Delhi. He shouldered the responsibilities as the head of the department and coordinator of the Centre for African Studies, UGC area study program for 2009–2012 and 2015–2019.

Serving as chief editor of the peer-reviewed and UGC-indexed *Indian Journal of African Studies* and also *Africaindia.org*. Professor Kumar is a passionate traveler who has visited 40 countries for research and teaching assignments. He is the chief collaborator of the Indian Council of Social Science Research–National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ICSSR–NIHSS) and the International Joint Project on Religion, Yoga and Education in India and South Africa.

He has shared his expertise on different aspects of Africa before audiences of the International Geography Union (2004, 2008), Ronald H. Brown Institute (2008), United Nations Organization (2012), World Policy Council (2014, 2016), European Commission of African Studies (2014), Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (2015), IBSA, BRICKS–IKS (2016, 2018, 2019) and many others. Professor Kumar has been published in nearly 150 different books, journals and newspapers. He has actively contributed his opinion on India and Africa in the different international media channels of BBC, Aljazeera (English), ABC (USA), Yomiuri Shinbun (Japan) and All India Radio.

⁷³ एकम सत वपिर्बहधाः वदन्तः (Eikam Saty Vipra Bahuda Vadanti). The Rig Veda/Mandala 1/Hymn 164. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rig_Veda/Mandala_1/Hymn_164, accessed 17 June 2021.