

MENTAL HEALTH AMID PANDEMIC

With second wave of COVID-19 pandemic wrecking havoc in India and lives of Indians at stake, all stakeholders are putting in their best efforts and striving hard to fight the hydra-headed monster. As India becomes one of the worst affected countries globally, the vastly overstretched healthcare infrastructure is further constraining our fight against this deadly virus. In all this chaos and confusion, one of the most neglected areas is mental health of our people. With India being in a virtual lockdown since March 2020, majority of non-working have preferred to stay indoors with minimal outside activity. The most vulnerable sections of society, viz old and children have been the worst victims of this enforcement. Mental health concerns and treatment usually take a backseat when limited resources are geared for pandemic containment. In this global humanitarian crisis of COVID-19 pandemic, mental health issues are being reported from across the nation. The major mental health issues reported were stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, denial, anger and fear. Children and older people, frontline workers, people with existing mental health illnesses were among vulnerable in this context. COVID-19 related suicides have also been increasingly common.

Globally, measures have been taken to address mental health issues through religious use of guidelines and intervention strategies. The role of social media has also been immense in this context. State-specific intervention strategies, tele-psychiatry consultations, toll free number etc, specific for psychological and behavioral issues, have been issued by the Government of India and many State Governments for welfare of people. Keeping a positive approach, developing vulnerable-group-specific need-based interventions with proper risk communication strategies and keeping at par with evolving epidemiology of COVID-19 would be instrumental in guiding the planning and prioritization of mental health care resources to serve most vulnerable.

History suggests that any infectious disease outbreak or pandemic brings with itself a major setback in mental health front. In the case of the Ebola outbreak in 2014, symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and anxiety-depression were more prevalent even after a year of Ebola response. The global HIV pandemic also provides a similar picture. It has been found that the prevalence of mental illnesses in HIV-infected individuals is substantially higher than in the general population. The risk of PTSD in aftermath of the pandemic can, therefore, be a huge challenge to the mental health system of the country. Since the healthcare system focuses majorly on emergency services, individuals suffering from substance abuse and dependency disorders may see deterioration in their mental health as a result of this pandemic.

With many sectors seeing pay-outs and job losses across world, unemployment can worsen in future. This can lead to increase in suicide rates among the economically vulnerable. Further, the economic fallout and forecasted recession pertaining to 'The Great Lockdown' is feared to be the worst global economic crisis after 'The Great Depression'. It may lead to further deterioration of already fragile mental health issues of the affected.

Reports of stigmatization of front-line workers, resulting from the fear of getting infection from them, have surfaced across the world leading to increased mental health illnesses, like anxiety and depression among them. Government, professional organizations, civil society bodies and other relevant stakeholders. Lockdowns in India were stringently imposed from March last year and have been eased gradually since September, but schools remain closed and online classes replaced classroom-teaching. Parents are concerned about the effect of school closures, social distancing, and increased use of internet on their wards' mental health. Increased internet use makes it more difficult for parents to control the access, and frequent and unsupervised internet use is associated with self-harm and suicidal behavior among adolescents with numerous psychological risk factors.

Coronavirus might not be as lethal in children and adolescents as it is in adults, but it does cause a lot of psychological distress in this age-group. Adolescents are experiencing acute and chronic stress because of parental anxiety, disruption of daily routines, increased family violence, and home confinement with little or no access to peers, teachers, or physical activity. During the pandemic, adolescents at the safety risk of psychological problems might fall through the safety net provided by a protective family life, peer support, and psychological support from teachers. It is time to address adolescent mental health in India systematically besides monitoring incidence of various psychiatric disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety, and self-harm behaviors), and identifying factors for both risk and resilience.

OFF 'D' CUFF Expand your energy field

Energy follows thought. Your energies travel to where you place your attention. Kundalini describes personal energy fields, and raising your Kundalini really implies an expansion of this personal energy field. As we extend our individual energy fields from current self to higher aspects of Self, finally merging into pure consciousness and its oneness, we naturally experience its bliss. Mind expansion helps. Jnana Yog encompasses a long-term focused attention on higher aspects of Self and life; our attention shifts from the microcosm to the macrocosm. This is followed by energy flow and, over a period, this leads to raised energy fields. This is why we can be operating from the higher awareness and bliss of a raised Kundalini without ever doing any direct work on it; and why jnana are able to reach enlightened states of being.

In reverse, a raised Kundalini implies the wisdom and purity of an expanded beingness and, thus, energy management, be it through meditation, pranayam, kriya, reiki or some means of directly working with your energies. Jnana and meditation help expand your personal energy field. Bhakti, or devotion to God, helps for it is love in its various expressions. If your focus is on love, your energies follow, and you dwell in an expanded energy field moment-to-moment. Such a state eventually leads to what is known as a rising Kundalini. Based on the law that tantra employs — energy resists its opposite and raised energy fields automatically resist denser energy signatures of anger, judgement and sorrow — we find ourselves increasingly in sync with the universal qualities of love and beingness.

DIVYAA KUMMAR

Issues which UT of Jammu & Kashmir must first step on to show that an era with difference has arrived

Must focus on:

- Under Employed Youth -Rural Health Care - Nearness of Commonman to Distt. Adm./ MLAs-PSU- PoJK DPs
- Revisit Management of PSUs-Review ADB/WB Funded Projects -Health/ School Education-Electricity/Water- Social Audit

J&K Public sector companies/corporations (commonly referred as PSUs/PSEs) need immediate, serious and meaningful attention. Almost all units are sick and the employees are found on roads not only demanding timely payment of monthly salaries but also retired employees are seen demanding deposit of employer share of the CPF with Provident Fund Commissioner so that they can get on superannuation if not pension atleast their provident fund accumulations.

The overall policy for operation of corporations (PSU) is made by government, the Chief Executives are also posted mostly from Government cadres for short durations who have almost nothing at stake in case the government company faces economic crisis and if at all Managing Director is appointed from PSU cadre that too is mostly to choice of the 'government' totally ignoring the Rajan Committee Report 1980 where under it was envisaged to have a common cadre for all PSUs. Bureau of Public Sector enterprises that had to play a pivotal role as regards the policy management of PSUs and Human Resources has all these years (3 decades) remained defunct (instead officers not favourite of the Bosses in the Government of the day were usually 'fixed in there').

With the present policies and sickness of the employees born on the cadres of PSUs have been and are suffering. Ofcourse have been some employees who were got employed in Corporations and later were 'Got' sent to government departments to favour them with safe/secure career and have stayed for 2 to 3

decades outside parent corporation / some might have been even inducted in government cadres. Such cases must be immediately isolated by the Lieutenant Governor administration to call them back so that they are instead used to rehabilitate their parent organization and genuity of their recruitment is also tested. At a few occasions recommendations in reports have been made to close PSU like JKSRTC but ignoring reports new governments / administrators have sanctioned additional funds for new investments in the same PSE/PSU. Lieutenant Governor UT of J&K must put a check on that and before taking any new project for PSUs reports like Rajan Committee, Godbole Committee, Kundal Committee be referred for.

The Bureau of PSEs must be given pivotal role and must be headed by an officer from within or IAS cadres or through lateral entry with status of the level of atleast Financial Commissioner.

Putting the institutions like J&K Economic Reconstruction Agency (society registered under the Act VI of 1998 (1941 A.D) with the Registrar of Societies Govt. of J&K under registration No.4645-S of 2004.- ERA) back on the Track and investigating how far it has been made to function as it was envisaged in 2004 with the taking of the first ADB loan funded project with nearly getting the 'total' execution done with the appointment of fulltime con-



A Look through the mist Part-III

sultant teams.

Question is, has it worked the way it was first conceived as ADB funded project, may be even ADB experts from outside India will have to be involved for taking a review of the work so far done viz viz quality & quantity by ERA, the advantage drawn by getting the departmental works done through Consultant teams employed with ERA and like. ERA is now more than 17 years old and by May 2017 itself around Rs.3403.5 Cr (462 million US \$ ADB Loan and 238 million US \$ Self Finance 700) under ADB loan provisions were spent plus Rs.1564.5 Cr financial assistance as loan from World Bank under IDA for J&K sanctioned in 2016 (250 Million USD @Rs 62.58/USD which too has been executed by now) i.e total scarce funds of around Rs.5000 Cr may have got involved and hence before more investment is made a review must be had by Lieutenant Governor keeping in view the sad state of even urban water supply in cities of Jammu and Srinagar as well as road projects executed.

Making Government hospitals/dispensaries and Government schools on ground potential service institutions since even with the present man power and infra 80% of diseases/patients as well as school going children can served without much additional cost to UT exchequer provided the human resource deployed is made to deliver on ground since even for minor needs people have lost faith in the state institutions. Even

a labourer / daily wage earner family prefers to visit a doctor in private clinic for minor ailments and for sending child to a private academy (where in general we can find much less paid / qualified teachers employed).

8.Going by heavy handling / distribution loss of Power Development Department a serious review is needed. Simple reorganization and privatizing of a few distribution segments will not help. Checking wasteful expenditure on installation of so called "next generation domestic power meters" since even the earlier generation meters could do the job with effective supervision.

09.Strengthening NGOs (not receiving any funding for projects from Government) working for Audit and Research on social welfare programmes of State like supplying subsidized utilities, old age / widow pensions, child and mother care / Swachh Bharat, urban housing subsidy/ rural housing subsidy and getting audit / cost benefit analysis done since thousands of crores of rupees have been spent / are being spent on such projects and hence need has emerged about computing the budgeted expenditures with the genuineness of the identified beneficiaries / disbursement keeping in view that till recently it has been a common belief / slogan of politicians that hardly "15%" of the welfare expenditure made by government does the real good.

To be continued (Daya Sagar, a senior journalist and analyst of J&K Affairs, can be reached at dayasagr45@yahoo.com)

Need to conserve nature

DR BANARSI LAL & DR VIKAS TANDON

Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs but not every man's greed. -Mahatma Gandhi. Nature is a global asset. It forms the web of life of which we are an integral part and upon which we are fully dependent. Biological diversity is the natural biotic capital of the Earth which affects all of us. Human beings derive the supply of food, medicines, energy and many industrial products from biological resources. It is fact that the natural resources are in danger. There is dire need to make rigorous efforts to protect the natural resources so as to secure our present and future generations.

Every activity on this earth depends on the nature and every activity affects the mother Earth. Conservation of nature is of paramount importance for all the living organisms on this earth. Earth has given us food, shelter, water, air, animals, soil, minerals etc. so it's our moral responsibility to protect the nature and keep our environment neat and clean.

In present era, the nature is threatened by the deforestation, illegal trade of animals, industrial development, plastic pollution, chemicals use etc. Loss of natural resources is responsible for many ailments, natural disasters, global warming etc. There is urgent need to create a healthy environment so that our present and future generations can be saved.

Nature conservation means protecting the natural resources so that they are not overexploited by the human beings. Every day we cut around 27000 trees for the toilet paper.

If the paper used in the newspaper is recycled then we can save millions of trees daily. A glass bottle takes around 4000 years to decompose.

It is estimated that around 50,000 species on the earth extinct annually i.e. around 137 species in a day. Throwing of plastics in the sea kills around 1 million sea creatures.

The rainforests trees are cut rapidly. Wildlife is destroyed around 5,760 acres every day globally. There is dire need to protect the wildlife and promote the biodiversity.

It is fact that the natural resources are limited and they take millions of years to form. But the human beings exploit them for their comfort.

Human beings have threatened the natural resources and it is increasing day-by-day. Everybody should make efforts to save the natural resources. We can use the alternative energy resources such as wind and solar energy. There is need to plant more and more trees and prevent the soil erosion.

Freshwater should be used judiciously and recycling of kitchen water can be encouraged. Water is the precious natural resource. Vegetation should be encouraged in the catchment areas.

Use of biodegradable waste can be promoted. Use of vehicles should be minimized and use of cycles can be promoted for a good health and reduction in air pollution. Electricity should be used judiciously. Plastic pollution should be minimized and paper and jute bags should be promoted.

Organic farming should be encouraged for the production of safe and healthy food. It can help for the better health of human beings and also reduce the soil pollution.

Rainwater harvesting should be promoted and water treatment plants need to be installed. We should use less paper as far as possible.

There is dire need to re-examine our relationship with nature.

Although we are having numerous technological advancements but still we are completely dependent on healthy ecosystem for our food, clothes, shelter, health, water, medicines, fuel, energy etc.

There is need to work together to build the future of life in harmony with nature.2021 year can be said as the year of challenges, opportunities and solutions.COVID-19 pandemic has spread across the globe and adversely effecting almost all the sectors.

All the nations need to work together to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and recover from it. It seems that there is dire need to conserve the nature for the benefits of life on the Earth.

It is fact that nature acts as the solution of our many solutions. Nature is closely associated with the climate change, food security and health. Nature has been badly affected due to our short-sighted activities including infrastructure development, chemical farming, deforestation, mining etc.

All these activities have degraded the ecosystem and have created the pandemic like situations. All the nations across the globe are endeavouring to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is need to work together for the human well-being and also for resilient and sustainable global economy. The exploitation of renewable and non-renewable energy resources and rapid increase in the urbanization are severely affecting the natural resources.

Sustainable development is the only way to mitigate the needs of our present and future generations. It also ensures the health of the planet Earth.

It has been observed that around 25 per cent of all

animals and plants species are threatened with extinction. Awareness about preserving the endangered habitats is required to be created among the people.

Nature is the foundation for our food and health and plays a key catalyst to transforming food systems and improving human health.

A wide range of events are organized globally to increase the understanding of the important role of nature for our present and future generations. Various institutions, newspapers, radio, television, internet etc. can disseminate the information to the people especially on protection of nature.

Exhibitions, seminars and webinars should also be organised for the students, professional and general public and movies on natural can be telecasted, trees should be planted and literature on biodiversity should be distributed.

The biodiversity we observe today is the outcome of over 3.5 billion years of evolutionary history, shaped by the natural processes. Nature is the foundation for the life and for the essential services provided by ecosystems.

It plays as a key catalyst to transform our food system and thus improves the human health.

It underpins peoples' livelihoods and sustainable development in all realms of socio-economical activity, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism etc.

India is one of the richest nations in the world in terms of biological diversity.

Some parts of the country such as J&K and N-E states are very rich due to a variety of natural causes in biological diversity and some are less.

Many species of plants and animals are extincting every day due to disturbance in natural resources. Local food production system is vanishing day-by-day.

Loss of natural resources across the globe has increased alarmingly and many wildlife and plant species are on the verge of extinction. Governments and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) need to make more efforts to conserve the nature.

We should understand that nature is the foundation for the life and for the essential services provided by ecosystems. It ensures people's livelihoods and sustainable development in all realms of socio-economic activity, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism.

We all need to protect, conserve and sustain the natural resources. There is need to reuse, recycle and restore the natural sources.

(The writers are Head, KVK Reasi and Professor SKUAST-J.)

YOUR COLUMN

Respect women

Why should we get vaccinated against COVID-19?

Dear Editor, As if we get fully vaccinated, it will make us less likely to get COVID-19 infection. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine also helps keep you from getting seriously ill even if you get COVID-19. Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Vaccination may reduce spread of virus that causes COVID-19. The risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience sickness. COVID-19 vaccination will be an important tool to help stop pandemic. Growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people are less likely to be infected without showing symptoms (called an asymptomatic infection) and potentially less likely to spread virus that causes COVID-19 to others. After vaccination, if a person spreads transmission, it will also reduce chance of mutation and as a result will continue to keep current vaccine effective and can decrease severity of disease.

Prof Dr Vishal Tandon, GMC Jammu

Dear Editor,

Why women should be respected' needed to be replaced with 'why women should not be respected'. Firstly, the role played by women of managing household well, nurturing children and doing infinite services to their family is of great importance. The working women strive to maintain a balance between office and household chores. Women's contribution to the world can be considered more positive than that of males. Their worth can be best recognized by imagining their absence from the world. Imagine how chaotic and problematic it could become without women?

The erased idea of love and lack of romantic songs will surely make the world a dull place of scary and solitary men. New-generations would never be born and thereby taking human civilization to a definite end.

Moreover, when it comes to respect, every creation deserves respect and admiration. Women have stronger emotional endurance and are in no way less than men. In recent times, education has empowered them and given wings to move ahead to desired locations.

But, everyday they face a series of challenges and constant struggle to survive. The worsening social atmosphere of molestation and violence has made the whole world unsafe for them. The brutalities suffered by them create a big question mark on humanity.

Women play different roles in life. She is always care taker, the one who love you, care for you no matter how

you treat her. She always forgives and forgets.

To conclude, women should be respected because God created them as equals and so we have no right to torture them or keep them away from their rights. Harming or disrespecting them will affect your Karma and you will have to suffer in one way or another for it. If we can worship women in temples but do not give her respect and love she deserve, then all such worship is of use. It's unjustified and unreasonable how people like many of us, believe in the devotion of God, but do not value Good Karma.

There an old saying, 'Karma is very powerful. When you ditch somebody over, you'll also get a chance to know what that feels, like in end 'get a taste of your own medicine.'

So, women should be respected because they aren't stone or lifeless piece, they are humans, and have same structure of heart, same feelings as men. They shouldn't be alienated from Homo-sapiens.

They aren't weak; history is witness to their greatness. They aren't mere sexual objects, they are like a crown that must be held at high esteem for glorifying the world around them.

They play different roles as mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, professionals, etc. and make the world home-like and a better place to inhabit. They adorn the lives of numerous ones around them and complete mankind. Imagine a day without women & you will know 'It needs real strength to be a woman.'

Anam, Jammu.