

Book Review

Surabhi Mahajan, *COVID-19: Changing Social Fabric in India*, New Delhi : Nation Press, 2020.

S. K. Gupta, Panjab University, Chandigarh

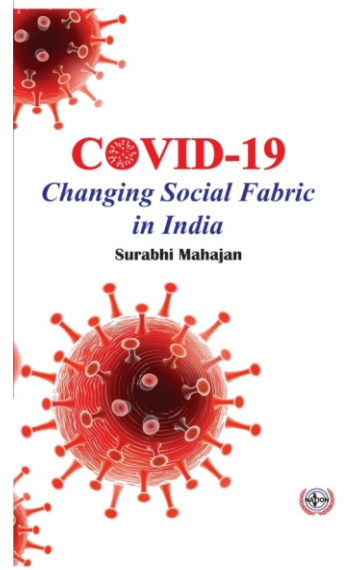
Surabhi Mahajan's book ***COVID-19: Changing Social Fabric in India***, is written effulgently and is packed with statistical data in the form of tables. It is a great reading for all those concerned with COVID-19 globally and its impact on individuals, families and society at large in India during first three phases of lockdown in particular. This book is very well timed at this hour when the coronavirus has taken a death toll of more than 8 lakh globally with 2 crore plus positive cases (more than 50,000 deaths in India with 30 lakh plus positive cases) and there seems to be no end to this unforeseen pandemic in near future.

The cover illustration of structure of coronavirus is just as captivating as the book itself. The book has a preface and is divided into seven chapters. The foreword has been written by Prof. Sandeep Bains, Dean of College of Community Science, PAU, Ludhiana. Three chapters (4, 5 and 6) are devoted to presentation and analysis of data. Interestingly, as one glances through the references, one notices that most references are of online articles of 2020 understandably in accordance with the topic under study. With barely any book in the reference list, the references reveal the fact that for this pertinent issue, not much has been documented or written. This huge gap is what the book tries to fill.

The book under review attempts to investigate the impact of lockdown due to COVID-19 on various sections of Indian society at three different levels : individuals, families and society. Its importance increases manifold as it also attempts to suggest possible measures to cope with such pandemic in future. The responses of a sample of 750 from 19 states and union territories of India (Bihar, Chandigarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal) well illustrate the impact at these three levels.

The authoress categorically mentions that the lockdown has been a tough period, but the overall, majority of the respondents are

appreciative of the government's decision taken for the welfare of the country men amidst this pandemic, irrespective of their age, sex, profession, type and financial position of the family. She has concluded on the basis of empirical evidence that our life at individual level is not going to be the same as before the global spread of COVID-19. Social distancing, use of masks, sanitization and washing hands repeatedly are going to be part of our life in during journey by bus or train, morning and evening walk, shopping in market places and malls and going out for dinning in hotels and restaurants, joining marriage (wedding) or birthday parties, any religious or political gathering and so on. This problem is going to be more severe when the authorities allow school/ colleges/universities to reopen shortly. Only time to come will validate as to how each and every one shall be able to learn this new way of life and customize themselves with new situation.



The study has revealed that overall the lockdown had more of a positive impact on families in terms of building sound relationship amongst each other and providing a moral support to handle the hard time of crisis. It gave a chance to the family members for not only staying together but also spending quality time with each other for better understanding. But, the negative implications especially for those families who were not able to earn two meals for themselves due to the lockdown or those families whose one or two members were struck anywhere else and so all were not together was painful and cannot be ignored. What one can do in this sensitive hour is to pray for one and all so that all families remain safe and comfortable to face global crisis spread due to COVID-19.

Her study has concluded that undoubtedly lockdown had a brighter side relating to self-realization and up-gradation of people, well-being of the community and healing of Mother Nature, new role of police and para- military forces, positive impact of increased use of technology as well as simple weddings without huge gatherings. However, the darker side also covers painful pictures of lower sections

striving for essential commodities, difficult & very painful exodus of migrant labourers to their homes in native states, loss of income and jobs for so many people due to the slowdown of economy, more problems like heated arguments, quarrels, divorce, depression etc. due to social isolation and an adverse effect on social relations due to social/physical distancing in the lockdown. Hence, it has to be ensured that a secondary epidemic of burnouts and stress-related diseases may not pop up in the end of latter half of 2020 or early 2021. The pandemic has left an indelible impression on many of us, making us to maintain cleanliness habits and follow good discipline in our life.

Every private or public library should have this book on its stacks for the simple reason that it provides an intensive narrative about the coronavirus, both at the global level as well as India, its impact at various level and the suggestions it renders to cope with such pandemic. The effectiveness of lockdown as a means to control the spread of coronavirus and the views of cross-section of society included in the book are also revealing and helpful for the authorities in the ongoing unlock periods. Not only this, Surabhi Mahajan comes up with some viable suggestions in last chapter to cope this as well as any other such pandemic in future. These suggestions are definitely going to prove very useful.

Dr. Surabhi Mahajan is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Apparel and Textile Science, College of Community Science, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana-141004, Punjab (India). Her Email ID for any further query is <surabhimahajanct@pau.edu>

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