

Report from R/P India

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India currently is in Stage 2 which means that the virus is limited to individuals and has not spread to communities.

At present the number of Coronavirus cases in India is 256 and number of deaths are 5 so far. Most of these cases are returnees from International travel, mainly from Europe and Iran. These cases have been put in isolation in Hospitals and the people who have come in contact with them have been quarantined in order to contain the Coronavirus pandemic.

As of now the Government of India has cancelled all International travel for Indians till further orders and has banned all International flights to India from March 22nd - 28th, 2020. A number of domestic flights have also been cancelled.

As a humanitarian gesture, the Indian Government has airlifted Indian citizens from Wuhan, Iran and other parts of the world. All returnees have been quarantined and the ones who have been declared negative or declared cured have been sent home. Facilities for large number to be quarantined have been created to accommodate fresh reported cases. Hospitals and doctors have been readied to treat any fresh cases.

Through both print and electronic media, people are being repeatedly reminded about maintaining personal hygiene by washing hands frequently with soap and water or by alcohol based sanitizing lotions. To wear masks and to refrain touching the face with unwashed hands. Masks and sanitizing lotions have been declared essential items so that none can horde them.

People have been urged to maintain social distancing and to refrain from shaking hands and hugging. All schools, colleges and educational institutions have been closed till the 31st of March. In most cities all Cinema Halls, Gyms, Spas, Malls and Restaurants etc. have been closed. All tourists spots, museums and entertainment parks etc have been closed. Companies

and offices have been asked to practice 'work from home' for most of the staff. People have been asked to stay at home and not to make non-essential trips out of home. In many states Curfew has been imposed which means not more than four people should congregate in a public place. Bus services and train services have been curtailed. All seminars, conferences, meetings etc have been stopped for now to enforce social distancing. Weekly people's markets have been closed and efforts are being taken to ensure social distancing.

Many of the large and popular temples have been closed to the public. The local temples are ensuring that the devotees do not congregate in large numbers and proper hygiene is maintained. In some states like Odisha the government has ordered temporary closure of all religious places like temples, mosques, churches and Gurudwaras till April. Churches, Mosques and Gurudwaras are witnessing fewer footfalls as people are being encouraged to pray at home. Religious leaders are also involved in creating awareness among the people about how to escape this virus. People are offering prayers for their own safety and of the fellow citizens at large.

In his address to the Nation yesterday (19th March, 2020) regarding the Coronavirus pandemic, our honorable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi emphasized that India cannot be complacent and laid stress on the social responsibility and that we as citizens have to combat this pandemic as a nation. He urged the entire nation to:

1. Exercise personal restraint and resolve to combat the virus
2. Called for a Public Curfew i.e. complete lock down on Sunday 22, March from 7.00 a.m. -9.00 p.m. No one to step outside the home for this period.
3. Social distancing to be practiced earnestly
4. Abide by the Government's guidelines
5. Stay at home but call at least 10 people to spread the above messages
6. All our essential service providers like medical professionals, transport service providers, security personnel etc are working overtime. Let us thank them by clapping and cheering on Sunday, 22 March at 5.00 p.m. from our balconies, windows or doorways.

7. Avoid crowding hospitals for routine check-ups. Call up family doctors for advice for small problems
8. Elective surgeries to be postponed
9. COVID -19 Economic Task Force has been set up by the Government to reduce economic issues caused by this pandemic
10. Traders, business people have been requested to take care of their employees also
11. No panic buying or hoarding as all essential commodities as milk, groceries and medicines will remain available.
12. Humanity and India should win this fight.

It is not out of place to mention here that after the recent lock down, we learnt that in ancient Indian Culture:

1. Why the bathrooms and toilets were outside our houses and not inside.
2. Why we should not touch anything or anybody when we return from a barbershop or a funeral. You may return to normalcy only after having a bath.
3. Why the footwear was to be kept outside the house and not inside
4. Why we were supposed to wash our hands and feet when we returned from school or outside after playing or after coming from a visit.
5. Why a mandatory 10 days isolation / quarantine (especially after a birth or death) in traditional households
6. Why the households must not cook in the house if there is a dead body inside the house
7. Why the washing of discarded clothes was to be done outside the house and not inside
8. Why it was mandatory to be clean and have a bath before cooking for the house.
9. Why once you have had a bath, you were not supposed to physically touch those who did not and especially those engaged in sanitation work.
10. And most of all why "NAMASTE" (greeting with both palm pressed together) was better than shaking hands.

These practices of maintaining physical hygiene, social distance and cleanliness were laughed at ridiculed by the West but now all these habits

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and routines followed from time immemorial stand validated.

We as a nation are determined to defeat this virus and earnestly pray that all the world over this pandemic should not create more havoc.