

COVID-19 AND MULTILATERALISM

**A REPORT BY THE ADI SHIVITE MINORITY TRADITION (ASMT) HINDU COMMUNITY
KAILASH UNION
JUNE 2021**

Introduction

I. Key obstacles

1. Globalization of disease¹ has led the world to be only as resilient as the least resilient country and person², especially for highly contagious COVID-19 which has spread with scale and severity not seen since Spanish flu³. The variants of the virus (such as B.1.617.2 Delta⁴, Delta Plus, Epsilon, Gamma⁵) continue to threaten even those vaccinated. Secondary diseases such as black fungus are targeting COVID patients⁶ and killing almost one in two persons in such cases⁷.
2. Distorted policy decisions and conflicting principles can lead to polarizations amongst nations and within, leading to various extremes such as – the hoarding of vaccines⁸ in some places, the wastage of vaccines⁹ in others, and an unaddressed shortage of vaccines globally¹⁰.
3. The pandemic has exposed the fragility¹¹ of the global system. The disruption in the supply chain is especially worrisome for essential food supplies¹² which disproportionately affects the already most vulnerable even more.
4. Lockdowns have brought the global economy into crisis¹³ bringing recessions¹⁴ and worsening unemployment rates¹⁵. Frequent lockdowns and the ongoing threat of famine¹⁶, especially in countries where employment is predominantly informal, are exacerbating worries that

¹ Webb, J. (2015). Globalization of disease, 1300 to 1900. In J. Bentley, S. Subrahmanyam, & M. Wiesner-Hanks (Eds.), *The Cambridge World History* (The Cambridge World History, pp. 54-75). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139194594.004

² Marc Fleurbaey (2020), We are all in this together? More than you think, 6 April

³ (i) "[Pandemic Influenza Risk Management WHO Interim Guidance](#)" (PDF). World Health Organization. 2013. p. 19. Archived (PDF) (ii) Spreeuwenberg P, Kroneman M, Paget J (December 2018). "Reassessing the Global Mortality Burden of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic". *American Journal of Epidemiology*. Oxford University Press. **187** (12): 2561 - 2567. doi:[10.1093/aje/kwy191](#). PMC 7314216. PMID 30202996. (iii) Rosenwald MS (7 April 2020). "[History's deadliest pandemics, from ancient Rome to modern America](#)". *The Washington Post*.

⁴ <https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-637724/v1>

⁵ <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/delta-plus-epsilon-gamma-new-covid-19-variants-have-scientists-worried>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-57027829>

⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/et-explains/black-fungus-how-infection-starts-death-rate-treatment-medicine-other-key-things-to-know/articleshow/82796816.cms>

⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55229894>

⁹ <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/indias-vaccine-wastage-concerns/>

¹⁰ https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/world-coronavirus-dispatch-no-easy-fix-for-global-vaccine-shortage-121051600344_1.html

¹¹ <https://hbr.org/2020/09/global-supply-chains-in-a-post-pandemic-world>

¹² <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/international-business/rising-world-food-prices-causing-concerns-among-people-imf/articleshow/83869245.cms>

¹³ (i) McFall-Johnsen, Juliana Kaplan, Lauren Frias, Morgan (14 March 2020). "[A third of the global population is on coronavirus lockdown - here's our constantly updated list of countries and restrictions](#)". *Business Insider Australia*. (ii) Elliott, Larry (8 October 2019). "[Nations must unite to halt global economic slowdown, says new IMF head](#)". *The Guardian*. ISSN 0261-3077. (iii) Cox, Jeff (21 November 2019). "[The worst of the global economic slowdown may be in the past, Goldman says](#)". CNBC.

¹⁴ (i) Zumbun, Josh (10 May 2020). "[Coronavirus Slump Is Worst Since Great Depression. Will It Be as Painful?](#)". *The Wall Street Journal*. ISSN 0099-9660. (ii) "[World Economic Outlook, April 2020: The Great Lockdown](#)". IMF.

¹⁵ (i) <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/15/weekly-jobless-claims.html> (ii) Partington, Richard (14 April 2020). "[UK economy could shrink by 35% with 2m job losses, warns OBR](#)". *The Guardian*. ISSN 0261-3077. (iii) Sullivan, Kath (13 April 2020). "[Unemployment forecast to soar to highest rate in almost 30 years](#)". ABC News. (iv) Amaro, Silvia (15 April 2020). "[Spain's jobless rate is set to surge much more than in countries like Italy](#)". CNBC.

¹⁶ (i) Harvey, Fiona (21 April 2020). "[Coronavirus pandemic 'will cause famine of biblical proportions'](#)". *The Guardian*. ISSN 0261-3077. (ii) "[World risks 'biblical' famines due to pandemic - UN](#)". BBC News.

starvation¹⁷ may cause more suffering than the virus itself. Far from the SDG-2 – Zero Hunger, the number is now predicted to come close to one billion.¹⁸

II. Solutions

(a) Revised economic policies

5. Human life is more precious and important than all economic principles or systems in totality because all these concepts are legitimate only because of their utility value which is to fundamentally make human life better. At least until this ongoing crisis ends, all economic policies (related to money, banking, fixing prices of commodities, etc.) need to be revised to make sure no human being suffers from hunger or the absence of required medical care.
6. As per Hindu principles¹⁹, the world including the economy evolves through five phases – (1) creation or growth, (2) sustenance or stagnation, (3) recession or revitalization, (4) reinvention, (5) breakthrough. As per Hinduism conventional economic growth is observed when best practices are applied diligently, however during times of crisis lead us to the fourth and fifth phases wherein the need to reinvent and deliver a breakthrough becomes both a survival need and an opportunity to surpass any means and measures of conventional economic growth.
7. According to the Keynesians, increased public expenditure during the great depression of 1929, improved the economy, however, the government never completely gave up trying to balance the budget, which resulted in it never spending enough to bring the economy out of recession until the second world war.²⁰ Similarly, the current crisis requires governments to temporarily discard trying to balance economic interests that compromise quarantine safety and put human life at risk and rather reinvent their economic strategies and multilateral coordination for benefiting during the subsequent breakthrough period after the end of the crisis.

(b) Hindu multilateralism

8. There is an immense inequality in the capacities of governments, organizations, and people on two grounds – (1) health response, (2) economic recovery. Surviving the highly contagious COVID-19 where the world is only as resilient as the least resilient country and person requires governments, organizations, and people to collectively address the crisis. From 3200 BCE²¹, 56²²

¹⁷ (i) <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/covid-19-pandemic-exacerbating-hunger-worldwide> (ii) <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/hunger-virus-how-covid-19-fuelling-hunger-hungry-world> (iii) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56711150>

¹⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/covid-19-pandemic-exacerbating-hunger-worldwide>

¹⁹ Kamikagama, Purva Pada, Chapter 1 verses 10-12 <https://www.himalayanacademy.com/saivite-scriptures/kamika-agama-purva-pada/>

²⁰ Klein, Lawrence R. (1947). "The Keynesian Revolution". New York: Macmillan: 56 - 58, 169, 177 - 179. Cite journal requires |journal= (help); Rosenof, Theodore (1997). Economics in the Long Run: New Deal Theorists and Their Legacies, 1933 - 1993. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. ISBN 0-8078-2315-5.

²¹ (i) Ved Veer Arya, "THE CHRONOLOGY OF INDIA: From Manu to Mahabharata", Aryabhata Publications, ISBN 8194321301 (ii) Nilesh Oak estimates the period as 5561BCE, "When Did The Mahabharata War Happen?: The Mystery of Arundhati", ISBN 0983034400

²² (i) Saktisangama Tantra, Chapter- Sundari Khandha, Saptam Patala, Verses 16-73, refer Saktisangama Tantra Vol III <https://archive.org/details/SaktisangamaTantraVolIII/GaekwadOrientalSeries/page/n83/mode/2up> (ii) List of 56 nations <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1H7OJADdrFjrdl8nR5KMuc7sjkG6zXOob0K6X5wbmBno/view>

nations in Asia had multilateral treaties based on the Hindu principle – ‘वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्’ (Vasudeva Kutumbhakam) – “Entire world is my family”.

अयं बन्धुरयनेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्। उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्॥ Maha Upanishad Ch. 6, verse 71-73.²³

(c) Provide sustainable community livings with multi-layered quarantine

9. Home or Self-quarantine is not a viable solution for a vast majority of people for either health safety or economic reasons. In Assam, home quarantine has been reported to be a primary reason for a large number of deaths.²⁴ In some places, governments have moved people out of home quarantine to covid-care-centers²⁵. Other issues linked with quarantine, especially in small houses are mental health problems²⁶ – such as an increase in suicidal ideation, especially amongst the younger population²⁷. This requires friendly quarantine setups which are self-sustained and sufficient in terms of food stock and supplies, recreation, employment, education, etc. In India, State Governments have attempted to provide free and paid²⁸ solutions which face various challenges related to hygiene, exorbitant pricing.²⁹ Some facilities³⁰ have seen challenges related to requests for private accommodation.³¹ Experimental townships such as Auroville³² have demonstrated a fair amount of success in creating a friendly, safe, and compliant quarantine facility. However, solutions such as Auroville are not open to the public. For two decades the leader of the ASMT Hindu community, the Supreme Pontiff of Hinduism (SPH) Jagat Guru Mahasannidhanam (JGM) His Divine Holiness (HDH) Bhagavan Nithyananda Paramashivam had been creating townships like Auroville across more than a hundred cities in several countries. Most of these townships such as the ASMT Monastery India, Bengaluru have been opened to offer multi-layered quarantine as a free public service with free food/accommodation, free internet to work from home (monastery). The ASMT community has seen a fair amount of success in these townships with zero reported cases of COVID infection in the past two years and has already saved many lives.
10. The SPH Nithyananda Paramashivam has urged citizens worldwide, especially from regions severely affected by the pandemic to protect themselves as the topmost priority and avail these free quarantine facilities that the community has created, especially as home quarantine has failed

²³ Translation of the Maha Upanishad Chapter 6 verses 71-73, “Only the denigrated small-minded with a very pathetic outlook of life discriminate between kin and a stranger; while for the magnanimous, the entire world is a family.”

²⁴ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/home-quarantine-is-prime-reason-for-large-number-of-deaths-in-assam-himanta-biswa-sarma/articleshow/82739223.cms>

²⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/mumbai-20l-in-home-quarantine-in-state-govt-to-shift-them-to-covid-centres-in-phases/articleshow/83129114.cms>

²⁶ www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/

²⁷ (i) <https://www.webmd.com/lung/news/20210210/child-suicides-rising-during-lockdown> (ii)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/11/23/covid-pandemic-rise-suicides/>

²⁸ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/compulsory-paid-quarantine-irks-people-returning-to-karnataka-from-other-states/articleshow/75707798.cms>

²⁹ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/karnataka-quarantined-man-claims-gross-mismanagement-by-authorities-1679768-2020-05-19>

³⁰ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/coronavirus-outbreak-manesar-quarantine-facility-diamond-princess-japanese-cruise-ship-6312521/>

³¹ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/mar/13/coronavirus-demand-for-separate-rooms-hindering-functioning-of-armys-quarantine-facility-2116207.html>

³² <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/the-auroville-way-of-tackling-the-pandemic/article34748146.ece>

for many and is known to be a primary reason for a large number of deaths in many scenarios.³³ The SPH Nithyananda Paramashivam has emphasized the need and urged the government worldwide to provide food, safety, medical care, shelter, and all survival needs to all human beings under their care, with absolute multilayer quarantine, until coronavirus is eliminated from planet earth including all different strains of the virus.

(d) Educate citizens on individual pandemic management

11. Unlike previous pandemics, the current era provides active, real-time, and visual information about fatalities. Underreporting of this data may give false hope and make people reckless. Exaggerations in reporting can also make people reckless as they may feel eventual death due to a coronavirus is inevitable. Proper education is extremely crucial, as it will dramatically reduce the number of deaths and reduce the challenge on the health-care-systems. Alcohol-related deaths have hit a record high during this pandemic³⁴, and long post-lockdown liquor lines³⁵ are some extremely worrisome issues regarding which people need to be educated. As a top priority, people need to be given confidence in their life and security about their future for them to stop behaving recklessly or fall into depression and commit suicide³⁶.

(e) Leveraging best of different economic systems based on charity, barter, and money.

12. Ancient Hindu economic treaties by Paramashiva (primordial Hindu divinity) describe three kinds of economic systems and their principles – (1) for things that do not perish by sharing – such as education and knowledge – Paramashiva recommends that no fee be charged³⁷, (2) for survival needs – such as food and healthcare – barter and charity are recommended³⁸, (3) for all other infrastructure development works, services, and commodities gold and conventional currency based transactions are allowed. These systems are still in practice in the modern-day, but grossly overlooked and not sufficiently studied with their close relation to mainstream economics. The WHO³⁹ and GISAID⁴⁰ provided early access to data regarding the virus - this is an example of an open knowledge-based economic policy where critical data about the virus was not monetized. Similarly, South Korea helped the USA access masks and testing kits, and there was a hope that this would lead to a reciprocal arrangement in terms of vaccines⁴¹, which is like a barter-based model allowed in food and healthcare.

(f) Hindu Policies for food security

13. A highly effective concept for ensuring food security in ancient Hindu nations was that of food grain banks. These were prevalent until the 18th-century. The elderly in villages would start food grain banks, with a seed capital of grains collected by fundraising. If any person met with a crisis such as a crop failure, the food grain bank would lend him grains in exchange for an interest

³³ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/home-quarantine-is-prime-reason-for-large-number-of-deaths-in-assam-himanta-biswa-sarma/articleshow/82739223.cms>

³⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55900624>

³⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52640266>

³⁶ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/suicides-touched-11-year-high-in-2020-experts-blame-covid/articleshow/80605949.cms>

³⁷ (i) सर्वेषामेव दानानां ब्रह्मदानं विशिष्यते। वार्यत्रगोमहीवासस्। तिलकाञ्जनसर्पिषाम्॥४-२३३॥ Manusmriti 4.233; (ii) Yājñavalkya (1.212); (iii) Atrismriti (340)

³⁸ Mahabharata, Vanaparva (200.35 and 200.37)

³⁹ <https://covid19.who.int/table>

⁴⁰ <https://www.gisaid.org/about-us/mission/>

⁴¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/return-favour-south-korea-looks-us-covid-19-vaccine-aid-2021-04-21/>

(compound interest was prohibited in grain banks) which the debtor was expected to return with the principal grain amount during the next harvest. The bank would expand its reserves of food grains based on interests earned and donations. At the time of severe crisis such as famine, the entire village would be able to withdraw these grains, and if required all such grain loans would be written off on humanitarian grounds. One such food grain bank was voluntarily created in 2020 by farmers in Bihar and has bailed out several workers who were forced to migrate due to lockdowns⁴². Food grain banks and their very concepts were destroyed by the British colonial government for diverting food resources to their war efforts⁴³ that resulted in massive famines and deaths due to starvation⁴⁴.

14. In Hindu temples, food is shared for free as a policy. This was the case in both ancient times⁴⁵ and in modern times⁴⁶. For 27 years, every month the Hindu ASMT community has served more than 3 million⁴⁷ free organic meals in religious gatherings to everyone without discrimination and has served over 1 billion⁴⁸ free meals in total. Such private and public efforts are crucial to ease the threats of starvation which is estimated to hit a billion people worldwide.⁴⁹

(g) Monitor global health.

15. The crisis requires governments to take aggressive, proactive measures to monitoring health. Smartphone applications have been used by governments that are based on health code color systems that categorize individuals into three color groups based on their health status and travel history and then determine whether they need to be quarantined.⁵⁰ Though there were privacy-related-concerns associated with these approaches, some of these measures such as agile daily reporting systems for accounting of newly suspected, diagnosed, asymptomatic cases, number of deaths, and generating area-wise statistics have played an important role in proactively

⁴² <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/apr/18/foodgrain-bank-by-farmers-in-bihar-bails-out-the-poor-amid-lockdown-2131742.html>

⁴³ Clingingsmith, David; Williamson, Jeffrey G. (2008). "[Deindustrialisation in 18th and 19th century India: Mughal decline, climate shocks and British industrial ascent](#)". *Explorations in Economic History*. **45** (3): 209 - 234. doi:[10.1016/j.eeh.2007.11.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2007.11.002).

⁴⁴ <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/timeline-of-major-famines-in-india-during-british-rule-1535543808-1>

⁴⁵ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/annadanam-at-temple-existed-1000-years-ago/article8487863.ece>

⁴⁶ <https://curlytales.com/top-5-jumbo-kitchens-across-indian-serve-thousands-best-food/>

⁴⁷ Anna Daan (Distribution of free organic meals) during festival such as Pournami (full moon day festival) - some instances - (i) https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/April_17_2011 , (ii) https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/January_08_2012 , (iii) https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/November_10_2011 , (iv) https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/December_08_2011 , etc. every full moon day for past 27 years.

⁴⁸ **(A)** Anna Daan during festivals **(B)** Anna Daan during Kumbh Melas serving 10 million free meals - https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/April_28_2016 , https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/May_17_2016 https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/September_10_2015 etc **(C)** Anna Daan during natural calamities and disasters https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/January_02_2012 , https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/January_03_2012 , https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/January_04_2012 , https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/January_05_2012 , https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/January_06_2012 , https://nithyanandapedia.org/wiki/January_07_2012 **(D)** Anna Daan during COVID-19 crisis aggravated by the lock down <https://fb.com/1499333043578701> , <https://fb.com/1504153646429974> , <https://fb.com/1504152806430058> **etc.**

⁴⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/covid-19-pandemic-exacerbating-hunger-worldwide>

⁵⁰ <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/china-s-aggressive-measures-have-slowed-coronavirus-they-may-not-work-other-countries>

responding to curb the spread of the disease⁵¹ and are being considered for implementation by various countries.⁵²

(h) Traditional medicine.

16. In Hinduism, nature, and planet earth⁵³ are respected as living divine mother energies capable of providing us with all our survival needs – food, medicines, etc. Though traditional medicines such as TCM⁵⁴ and Ayurveda⁵⁵ are effective in addressing COVID-related issues, and a few years ago a Nobel prize was awarded for scientific work based on traditional medicine⁵⁶ the mainstream western medicine has chosen to characterize Ayurveda as pseudoscience⁵⁷ and TCM as unscientific⁵⁸. Such demeaning of traditional medicine systems have lead nations to consider taking defensive unilateral decisions to protect their interests.⁵⁹ Outright rejection of traditional medicine is not wise and such policies should be revisited especially as these medicine systems are time tested and have kept people healthy for several generations. Kailash Union recommends governments worldwide provide solutions like Kailasa's Hindu Medical care (which includes completely free of charge services such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, Western medicines, and multi-layered quarantine) for complementing their ongoing public health efforts.

III. International Treaty for pandemic preparedness

17. International multilateral negotiations and treaties should consider:
- a. Multilateralism based on the spirit of – Vasudeva Kutumbhakam – “Entire world is my family”.
 - b. Prioritizing imparting education on individual pandemic management and giving hope to people.
 - c. Multilateral strategies and coordination for the pursuance of SDG-11 (sustainable cities and communities) with additional emphasis on multi-layered quarantine

⁵¹ Zhu N, Zhang D, Wang W, Li X, Yang B, Song J, et al. A novel coronavirus from patients with pneumonia in China, 2019. *N Engl J Med*. 2020 Feb 20;382(8):727–33.

⁵² www.zdnet.com/article/us-israel-south-korea-and-china-look-at-intrusive-surveillance-solutions-for-tracking-covid-19/

⁵³ ॐ वसुंधराय विद्महे भूतधराय धीमहि तन्नो भूमिः प्रचोदयात्। “Om, let me meditate on the Earth The One who provides all, bless us with abundance, And let the Goddess of Earth illuminate my mind” (Bhumi Devi Gayatri Mantra)

⁵⁴ Zhao Z, Li Y, Zhou L, et al. Prevention and treatment of COVID-19 using Traditional Chinese Medicine: A review. *Phytomedicine*. 2021;85:153308. doi:10.1016/j.phymed.2020.153308

⁵⁵ (i) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/many-patients-turn-to-ayurveda-for-post-covid-care/article34755600.ece> (ii) <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/mix-of-modern-ayurvedic-medicine-helps-treat-covid-19/article34701852.ece>

⁵⁶ <https://www.nobelprize.org/womenwhochangedscience/stories/tu-youyou>

⁵⁷ (i) Semple D, Smyth R (2019). [Chapter 1: Thinking about psychiatry](#). Oxford Handbook of Psychiatry (4th ed.). Oxford University Press. p. 24. doi:10.1093/med/9780198795551.003.0001. ISBN 978-0-19-879555-1. (ii) Sujatha, V (July 2011). "What could 'integrative' medicine mean? Social science perspectives on contemporary Ayurveda". *Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine*. **2** (3): 115 - 23. doi:10.4103/0975-9476.85549. PMC 3193682. PMID 22022153. (iii) Manohar, PR (April 2013). "Uniform standards and quality control of research publications in the field of Ayurveda". *Ancient Science of Life*. **32** (4): 185 - 6. doi:10.4103/0257-7941.131968. PMC 4078466. PMID 24991064. (iv) Bausell, R, Barker (2007). [Snake Oil Science: The Truth About Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#). Oxford University Press. p. 259. ISBN 978-0-19-538342-3.

⁵⁸ (i) Singh S, Ernst E (2008). *Trick or Treatment: Alternative Medicine on Trial*. London: Bantam. ISBN 978-0593061299. (ii) ["Hard to swallow"](#). *Nature*. **448** (7150): 105–6. July 2007. Bibcode:2007Natur.448S.105. doi:10.1038/448106a. PMID 17625521 (iii) Shang A, Huwiler K, Nartey L, Jüni P, Egger M (October 2007). ["Placebo-controlled trials of Chinese herbal medicine and conventional medicine comparative study"](#). *International Journal of Epidemiology*. **36** (5): 1086–

92. doi:10.1093/ije/dym119. PMID 17602184

⁵⁹ <https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m2285>

protection without disrupting life and economy such that effects of lockdown are unnoticeable.

- d. Waiver of patents on extremely essential vaccines and common global funding of vaccines.
- e. Everyone should be provided access to traditional health care systems free from policies that are prejudicial and discriminatory towards these systems.
- f. The creation of food grain bank systems and other traditional economic systems as described in this report would help the most vulnerable people of the world.