

Letter to the Editor

Novel corona virus outbreak: learn a lesson from Prayag Raj Kumbh

Sir,

In December 2019, coronavirus again divert global attention. New coronavirus as first detected in Wuhan, Hubai Province, China has officially named novel coronavirus and designated as 2019 - n CoV. The deadly pneumonia outbreak associated with virus is a zoonotic disease, transmitted to persons from animals.¹

The corona virus induced outbreak has been declared as public health emergency of international concern by WHO (World Health Organization) on 30th January 2020 because the disease spread to other countries too. On 11th February 2020, the WHO said it has chosen a name for the disease that makes no reference to place, animals or people to avoid stigma. The disease caused by new corona virus now has a name COVID-19.²

Novel corona virus is a member of coronavirus family contains single strands RNA. The name come from Latin word corona meaning crown. Coronaviruses are zoonotic in nature and hundreds of corona virus circulated among animals. Bats are known carrier of latest strain of coronavirus. Bats can infect other animals via their poops or saliva thus spread virus widely. Three of the coronaviruses can have more serious outcome in people - SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) which emerged in 2002, middle east respiratory syndrome (MERS) emerged in 2012 and current COVID-19 which emerged in December 2019. The current Wuhan coronavirus share 2/3rd of its genome with virus responsible for SARS and both originated from bats in China.^{1,3}

In Wuhan, China a cluster of cases displaying the symptoms of severe pneumonia of unknown cause was linked to Wuhan seafood wholesale market which have numerous states selling fishes, chickens, bats, marmots, cats, dogs, snakes, spotted dears, pangolins and other wild animals. There is a view that pangolin may be the mysterious intermediary link between bats and humans. Sample from patients (approx 2/3rd) have severe pneumonia infected with coronavirus either worked or frequently shopped in the Wuhan seafood wholesale market which also sold live and newly slaughtered animals. The seafood market has been implicated in the origin and spread of past epidemics of SARS and MERS and now COVID19.¹⁻³

Virus spread easily from infected person to normal person. Transmission among people is primarily occurs through contact via respiratory droplets generated by sneezing and

coughing within a range up to 6 feet's. People infected with this virus have features of respiratory infection. More severe case lead to pneumonia, kidney failure and even death. No antiviral work against coronavirus nor no specific antiviral is effective to treat the deadly disease. Only conservative treatment may be the option as per symptomatology. Recovery depends upon strength of immune status.³

Coronavirus induced disease has been originated in last month of 2019 from Wuhan China and spread to different countries, what a coincidence? in first month of 2019, world largest religious congregation Kumbh mela (fair) 2019 was organized at confluence of three most scared holy rivers - Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati at Trevini Sangam, Prayag Raj (also famous as Allahabad), Uttar Pradesh, India (Bharat). The congregation includes sadhus, saints, sadhvis, kalapwasi and religious pilgrimage those were stayed throughout for holy dip in Sangam.

The event encapsulates the science of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, ritualistic traditions, social and cultural customs making it extremely rich in knowledge. After the Yoga, Kumbh mela is listed as an intangible culture heritage under UNESCO in December 2017.⁴

Peoples from almost all the countries visited the Prayag Raj Kumbh from January to march 2019. It is beyond imagination that approximately 250 million peoples of different religions and nationality attended the 55 days long spiritual festival. Even ambassadors of about 71 countries were also witnessed the grand event. Apart from setting the record for largest traffic and crowd management, the Kumbh mela 2019 has made a hatrick under Guinness World Records - largest parade of 500 shuttle buses, lining in a row for nearly two miles. Largest exercise of hand painting with involvement of 7500 participants in 8 hours. Largest sanitation drives because more than 10000 sanitation workers sweeping the mela area.

The Kumbh mela 2019 was not organized for the first time. From ancient time, every year month long Magh mela, at every six years Ardh Kumbh and at every 12 years Kumbh or Maha Kumbh has been organized at Triveni Sangam Prayag Raj. This time Kumbh Mela 2019 will be remembered not only for hatrick world record and planned crowd management but also for no major health hazards. Just imagine there was minute to minute burden of outbreak of unknown major diseases, epidemics to pandemic due to unimaginable crowded.⁵

But Kumbh Mela 2019 completed smoothly. Why? Peoples stayed in mela followed the strict discipline of traditional holy bath regularly, maintenance of hygiene and walking in cold weather. Pure vegetarian diet, yoga, sun-bath and meditation enhanced their immunity. Over all, the hidden faith towards gods enhanced their will power many folds.

Although due to such large crowd of peoples from all continents, risk of vector borne diseases, water born disease and air born disease was there. Health sector gave special attention on cleanness and prepared with record 1.25 lakhs toilets and 20000 urinals for proper sanitation. 20000 dustbins had been placed across mela premises. Well planned action of solid waste management, fogging as well as maintenance of water quality resulted disease free mela area.⁶

Therefore, in spite of such huge gathering of approximately 250 million peoples in almost 55 days of great religious festival, no major disease outbreak or epidemics occurred in 45 km radius of mela area during and after Kumbh mela. World can adopt many messages from rich traditional, spiritual, motivational culture from Prayag Raj Kumbh.

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