

Impact of COVID 19 on environment

The coronavirus disease or COVID19 pandemic is the current defining global health crisis of our time and one of the greatest challenge we have faced since WWII. Since its dawn in west Asia late 2019, the virus has spread across to every continent except Antarctica.

So what is COVID 19? Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from common cold to complex respiratory diseases. It is a part of SARS CoV2 also called human coronavirus 19. It is infectious, many countries have declared lockdown and majority of workforce confined to work from home. A person infected with the new coronavirus can end up infecting 1 million. Countries are racing against time to reduce the spread of the virus by testing and treating patients, carrying out contact tracing, controlling travel, isolating and quarantining citizens, cancelling and postponing events and large gatherings. When implemented in a planned manner, complete lockdown has proved to be very effective in limiting the spread of this pandemic. This pandemic has resulted in the largest amount of lockdowns worldwide at the same time. By April 2020 3.9 billion of the overall worldwide population were under lockdown.

COVID 19 may be a bane for humanity but it for sure is a boon for the environment. Yes, this tiresome pandemic has resulted numerous changes on climate and environment.

AIR

Before the start of the pandemic, we were gasping toxins due to the amount of greenhouse gases that had been emitted over past decades. Studies have found that there is both indirect and direct impacts of the lockdown. The initial studies indicates a positive indirect impact on the environment. On the one hand, climate experts predict that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions could drop to proportions never before seen since World War II (Global Carbon Project, 2020). This outcome is mainly due to the travel restriction and stoppage of Industrial activities adopted by the governments as part of lockdown policies.

In China, lockdowns and other measures resulted in a 25 per cent reduction in carbon emissions. In other parts of the world, such as Europe, air pollution has reduced tremendously since governments ordered citizens to stay at home to contain the spread of the new coronavirus. Main industries as well as other regular activities have ground to a halt. Even industries were closed down and not allowed to function. This in turn led to air pollution dropping significantly, as there was a marked decline in nitrous oxide emission.

WATER

No doubt, because of reduced human movements and ventures even the oceans are recovering and marine life is luxuriant. The absence of tourists, a result of the travel restriction measures has caused a notable change in the semblance of many beaches

in the world. For example, beaches like those of Acapulco (Mexico), Barcelona (Spain), or Salinas (Ecuador) now look cleaner and with crystal clear waters.

Closer home, Indian rivers also look cleaner as there is huge drop in Industrial effluents polluting these rivers. The increase in water clarity is due to the settling of sediment that is often disturbed by movement of various water transports.

During Lockdown, excessive domestic usage of water is worrisome. From making of food to washing clothes and cleaning of house, we tend to use excess of water and it becomes more difficult when all the members of house start using it 24×7.

NOISE

Noise pollution, unwanted or excessive sound that can have harmful effects on human health and environmental quality. Noise pollution is commonly generated inside many industrial facilities and some other workplaces, but it also comes from highway, railway, and airplane traffic, from various construction activities and melodies at high volume. Environmental noise is one of the main sources of discomfort for the population and the environment, causing health problems and easily altering the natural state of the ecosystems.

After the lockdown, there is a complete ban on vehicular movement, Industrial activities, people in public places and all these led to drastic reduction in noise levels.

LITTER

Plastics, a major component of waste produced, have been essential to keeping hospitals running and protecting our frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. They're the bedrock of medical equipment and protective gear. As a consequence of the unprecedented use of disposable face masks, a significant number of masks were discarded in the natural environment, adding to the worldwide burden of plastic waste. Hence medical waste is on the rise. Hospitals in Wuhan produced an average of 240 metric tons of medical waste per day during the outbreak, compared to their previous average of fewer than 50 tons.

The generation of organic and inorganic waste is indirectly accompanied by a wide range of environmental issues, such as soil erosion, deforestation, air, and water pollution.

WILDLIFE

In many urban areas, animals have been spotted moving about freely where once they feared to go to. Even sea turtles have been spotted returning to areas they once avoided to lay their eggs, all due to the reduced human interference.

The world look at COVID 19 as killer disease. The various measures introduced to fight it has brought in unimaginable misery for many across the globe. At the same time, by design or by chance this pandemic has caused a few good things for the mankind as we can see above. The last few months has resulted in huge improvement in the quality of the environment we live in. But the sad part is the world cannot be in

Name: Neha Sajan
Mail ID: nehasajan2004@gmail.com

a state of lockdown for long and soon the world will be back to the olden ways again. Now that we have seen what exactly is the impact of our activities on the environment, at least our generation, which has witnessed this sudden change in the quality of environment should not let things go back to olden days again. After all we cannot look for a pandemic to make our environment better. We have to make it better on our own.