



**CONSCIOUSNESS AS THE BASIS OF DISEASE AND DISASTER**

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Article Received on 30/04/2022

Article Revised on 20/05/2022

Article Accepted on 10/06/2022

**ABSTRACT**

The phrase 'everything is interconnected' is well exemplified by the widespread consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures needed to overcome them. We can perceive consciousness as the common basis underlying the pandemic as well as events like the war in Ukraine and climate change, through inquiry and introspection. Two intuitive theories of causation, the theory of imbalance of human tendencies and the theory of karma, throw light on the possible chain of events behind the occurrence of diseases and disasters. Consciousness can be considered to be the basis of everything in the universe, including the myriad living and non-living entities, which are thus inexplicably interconnected. Diseases and disasters apparently manifest at the global level, when there are shifts in the collective human nature and consciousness, and are resolved when there is corrective change. A disastrous climate change or a global war between nations may become nature's way of dealing with the problem in a 'surgical' way, when a 'medical' way like the Covid-19 pandemic becomes insufficient. Trying to dwell and act upon the 'Self' ('inner self' or pure consciousness) within, instead of on one's 'self' or ego, is a behavioral change that can facilitate the restoration of equilibrium of individual as well as collective consciousness.

**KEYWORDS:** Self, Inner self, Universal consciousness, Individual and Collective consciousness, Restoring equilibrium.

**INTRODUCTION**

The process of seeking the meaning of any new situation can open up unforeseen insight and understanding. The scale of disruption caused by Covid-19 pandemic prompted many to seek a meaning for the crisis that has impacted the world, much beyond the conventional realm of public health. The phrase 'everything is interconnected' is well exemplified by the widespread consequences of the pandemic and the measures needed to overcome them. As the pandemic is being brought under control, there is outbreak of war in Ukraine that is threatening to spread to other nations. We also have the climate crisis, which is slowly and surely endangering the world. These and several other crises affecting the world one after another, may be viewed as unconnected events, but as physicians trained to go into the root cause of anything that affects the health of human beings, one can perceive shifts in consciousness as the common basis underlying them, through inquiry and introspection.

**Taking the intuitive view:** Though humans perceive events and understand them based on logic, the cognition usually starts as intuition and logic comes thereafter. Intuition can have as its basis, past experiences that may or may not be remembered.<sup>[1]</sup> Two intuitive theories of causation concerning human nature, the theory of

imbalance of human tendencies and the theory of karma, throw light on the possible chain of events leading to the occurrence of diseases and disasters in general. Before going into these intuitive theories of causation and how they involve shifts in consciousness, the first question that needs an answer is: how does the perceived shift in consciousness translate into, in the case of Covid-19, the structure and function of the virus and its variants that apparently cause the havoc?

**The common basis of consciousness and its equilibrium:** Empirically there is evidence that the consciousness (awareness) underlying human nature and behavior, is the basis of health and disease.<sup>[2]</sup> Taking a larger perspective, consciousness can be considered to be the basis of everything in the universe (panpsychism),<sup>[3]</sup> including the myriad living and non-living entities, which are thus inexplicably interconnected. Diseases and disasters, explained through various theories of causation, involve shifts in consciousness. They are resolved when there is corrective change, which presumably maintains the individual and collectively, the universal consciousness [known in Yoga as *Sat-chit-ananda*]<sup>[4]</sup> (truth-consciousness-bliss), in equilibrium. Implied in this concept of universal consciousness is the

philosophical assumption that consciousness preceded and is hence the basis of the entire universe.

**Theory of imbalance of human tendencies:** According to the first of the two intuitive theories of causation, any disease is said to be a manifestation of imbalance of tendencies or *Gunas*<sup>[5]</sup> present in every individual. The health of individuals depends on a fine balance between three in-born tendencies viz. active, passive and the serene. Active tendency leads to a dominant mindset, passive tendency to inertia and attachment, while the serene tendency enlightens and uniquely heals the disturbances arising from the first two. When there is an imbalance between the three tendencies, disease manifests in the individual. The process of undergoing the disease serves to restore the balance between the tendencies.

Extrapolating this concept, a global imbalance of the three tendencies might have predisposed the human society to the pandemic. A violent mindset (active) and excessive sensory attachments (passive) were rampant, and the serene tendency subdued, in the pre-Covid times. Faced with the Covid-19 calamity, the instinct for survival may be forcing a change in human behavior and we may be seeing signs of dampening of the active and passive tendencies, and a corresponding augmentation of the serene tendency. The value of being serene and allowing health appropriate behavior to become central to life, instead of allowing unrestrained active and passive tendencies, is being learnt the hard way. If this is so, then one can expect the pandemic to go on until the global imbalance of human tendencies is largely set right.

**Theory of karma:** Karma<sup>[6]</sup> refers to the principle of cause and effect where one's thoughts and actions determine the course of one's life, good action leading to good result and bad action resulting in bad result. The karmic principle applied to the world at large, intuitively throws light on the cause of the present situation and the possible future course of events. Now, the following key question arises - how is karma determined to be good or bad?

The karmic principle can be rationalized based on the concept of 'self' and 'Self' (or 'inner self'). The 'Self' is 'pure consciousness', whose nature is 'truth-consciousness-bliss' or *Sat-chit-ananda*, identical with universal consciousness mentioned earlier. The 'self' (or ego) is what we perceive of ourselves in the waking state. The 'Self' is blissful by itself and is reached by every individual subconsciously during the state of deep sleep. When the thoughts and actions of the 'self' is in tune with the 'truth-consciousness-bliss' nature of the 'Self' within, the individuals are at peace with themselves; harmony prevails in all spheres of activity and the karma that accumulates from such activity is good. When the 'self' is in conflict with the 'Self' within, the thoughts and actions of individuals go against 'truth-

consciousness-bliss' and bad karma builds up. The individual, and by extension the society, has to undergo the consequences of accumulated good and bad karma.

It is a fact that in recent times, much of the collective human thoughts and actions have been out of tune with 'truth-consciousness-bliss' nature of 'Self', which is expressed rather simplistically but succinctly as the 'seven social sins'.<sup>[7]</sup> The consequences of accumulated bad karma are possibly manifesting as the pandemic, a war that threatens to become global, an imminent disastrous climate change and so on.

**Restoring the equilibrium of consciousness:** However, mankind can endure and overcome these adverse situations through augmentation of the serene tendency that allows it to attune itself back with the 'truth-consciousness-bliss' nature of the 'Self', accumulate good karma and help hasten the end of the pandemic. An active or passive tendency that is preoccupied with the 'self' and keeps away from the 'Self', predisposes to bad karma and perpetuates the adversity. A disastrous climate change or a global war between nations may become nature's way of dealing with the problem in a 'surgical' way, when a 'medical' way like Covid-19 pandemic proves to be insufficient. Human behavioral change is the means, for reaching the goal of restoration of equilibrium of individual and collective consciousness.

## CONCLUSION

It is useful and instructive to view diseases and disasters as shifts in consciousness, from both the individual as well as collective points of view. Dwelling and acting upon the 'Self' ('inner self' or pure consciousness) within, instead of being carried away by one's 'self' or ego, through augmentation of the serene tendency, is a behavioral change every individual can make through practice. This will hasten the resolution of diseases and disasters, both at the individual and collective levels. Insight into the role of consciousness offers a new dimension to the understanding of pathogenesis and management of diseases and disasters.

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