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# SIKKIM UNIVERSITY CHRONICLE

## MIND YOUR MIND DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Dr. Satyananda Panda (Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of Psychology, SU)

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that has plunged the world into uncertainty may be confusing and stressful for all of us. As the coronavirus pandemic affects numerous facets of our society, it also affects everyone in several ways. Fear, anxiety, and stress about a new disease, and what could happen in the coming weeks can be overwhelming. This kind of feeling is completely normal during times like this. However, these feelings can cause strong emotions both in adults and children. Isolation and remote working can take a huge toll on the individual's mental health, particularly those who are already living with chronic conditions.

Coping with stress and anxiety in a healthy way during this period will help us in living a stress-free mentally healthy life:

### **Protect your mental health**

Mental health is a crucial part of overall health and wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It may also affect how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices during an emergency. People with pre-existing psychological state conditions or substance use disorders could also be particularly vulnerable in an emergency. Mental health conditions (such as anxiety, depression, mania, or schizophrenia) affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior during the way that influences their ability to relate to others and function each day. These conditions could also be situational (short-term) or long-lasting (chronic). People with preexisting psychological state conditions should continue with their treatment and remember of latest or worsening symptoms. If one thinks that he's got new or worse symptoms, one might call the healthcare provider

### **Manage your loneliness and depression**

Being cut off from the love, support, and close contact of family and friends due to lockdown can trigger depression or make existing symptoms worse. Months of social distancing and sheltering at home can leave you feeling isolated, lonely, and depressed, having to deal with the situation alone.

ce your problems alone. However, you can break the cycle by focusing on something that adds meaning to your life. You can learn a new language, try your hand at a musical instrument musical instrument, write a novel, take up cooking, grow your own vegetables, play online chess, or even attend a webinar of your interest. These activities can give you a welcome break from negative thoughts and worries, and add a sense of meaning to your days.

### **Positively cope with stress**

- Know what to do if you are sick and concerned about COVID-19. Consult a health care provider before you begin any self-treatment for COVID-19.
- Know where and how to get treatment and other support services and resources, including counselling or therapy.
- Take care of your emotional health. Taking care of your emotional health will assist you to think clearly and react to the urgent must protect yourself and your family.
- Take a break from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body:
  - Take deep breaths, stretch, dance, try yoga, or meditate.
  - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
  - Exercise regularly.
  - Get plenty of sleep.
  - Make time to unwind- Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
  - Connect with others- Talk with people you trust about your concerns and the way you're feeling.
  - Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations. While social distancing measures are being followed, consider connecting online, or by phone or mail.

## *Editorial*

Dear Readers,

Amidst this COVID crisis, I have temporarily taken charge and will be trying my best to make SU Chronicle a good read.

The classes may be suspended; however, the University has been working a lot through online mode to fill in the gap as much as possible. The academic departments have been organizing webinars and other online activities to keep the students engaged and the department academically active with these virtual interactions.

The pandemic situation is new to all, and with this issue we have tried to provide some tips to protect your mental health during this crisis. Let's not panic and let's stay positive, following the prescribed social distancing protocol. You may like to explore the writer in you and if you think it's worth a read you may contribute to SU Chronicle.

Do keep us updated on all your academic/departmental activities and please continue contributing articles to the Chronicle.

**Grace Dechen Chankapa**

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**Take social media breaks**

Social media can be most addictive especially with more free time in isolation and everyone in constant contact. Of course, it's good to remain informed, especially about what's happening in your area. But too much news - especially social media - can add up to your anxiety. To avoid being overwhelmed, set limits on your media consumption and smartphone use. It is advised to develop a daily schedule and do your best to mute keywords which might be triggering on Twitter and unfollow or mute accounts. Also, mute WhatsApp groups and hide Facebook posts and feeds if you find them too overwhelming.

**Avoid burnout and get active**

With weeks and months of the coronavirus pandemic ahead, it is important to have downtime and stay active. It is recommended to continue to access nature and sunlight wherever possible. This may become increasingly difficult but do your best to stretch, move around and break a bit of a sweat. A diet chock full of nutrients and vitamins is strongly recommended. While it may be easy to order delivery instead of risking the malls, a healthy and balanced diet works wonders for your immune system and mental state. Plenty of water helps too.

**Protect yourself from Suicide thoughts and Behaviors**

Different life experiences affect a person's risk of suicide. For example, suicide risk is higher among people that have experienced violence, including maltreatment, bullying, or sexual violence. Feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, and other emotional or financial stresses are known to raise the risk of suicide. People could also be more likely to experience these feelings during a crisis sort of a pandemic. However, there are ways to guard against suicidal thoughts and behaviors. For example, support from family and community, or feeling connected, and having access to in-person or virtual counselling or therapy can help with suicidal thoughts and behavior, particularly during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Practice staying within the present moment: Worrying won't change or help the situation; try meditation or guided imagery.

**Use cognitive-behavioral skills**

Remember, how you think affects how you are feeling and the way you behave. If you are having a negative thought (e.g., "I might get the COVID-19 virus and get really sick."), change it to a positive (e.g., "I will stay healthy by taking good self-care and practicing good infection control practices."). Repeat these positive thinking statements several times each day. Therefore, practice regularly cognitive restructuring to change the way that you think about negative situations and bad habits.

**You Must Avoid**

1. Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and other substances: Use of tobacco or alcohol or other substances to cope with emotions or boredom can worsen physical, mental health and reduce immunity. People who have already got a substance use problem may require professional help, especially once they feel low in mood or stressed.
2. Don't shun or judge people with a COVID infection: While you would like to maintain a physical distance from the infected person, and keep yourself safe to stop such infection, remember they have also issues related to care and concern. If you recognize someone who may need the information, tell them about precautions, and the way to urge medical assistance, if required. Now, the time has come to end the stigma and send the message- Hate the disease and not the victim.
3. Do not panic: If you happen to get infected with Corona, remember most people get better. Do not panic. Practice self-isolation and take medications that are advised.

Help and support are vital for persons with mental illness from their families and other caregivers. Remember, good mental health in the difficult times may win you the battle more easily. If the problems persist, please feel free to contact the Samadhan Counselling Centre (Mob. 7908948263) of Sikkim University or contact your doctor or any mental health professionals.

**One day Webinar on Impact of COVID19 on Gender Equality****Dr Swati Akshay Sachdeva, Presiding officer (ICC) Sikkim University**

One day Webinar on '**Impact of COVID19 on Gender Equality**' was jointly organized by the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), Sikkim University and University Grants Commission (UGC) on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2020. The distinguished speakers for the webinar were Dr. (Prof) Shweta Prasad, Department of Sociology, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and Dr. (Prof) Sanchari Roy Mukherjee, Department of Economics, North Bengal University (NBU).

The Webinar commenced with a welcome address delivered by Dr. Swati Akshay Sachdeva, Presiding officer (ICC) Sikkim University, highlighting the purpose behind organizing the Webinar. She mentioned how the COVID 19 crisis affects men and women in different ways and this has thrown gender based differences into sharper relief. Given that COVID -19 is not gender blind, the response to it should not be either.

The first speaker was Prof. Sanchari Roy Mukherjee, sharing her views on the topic '**Challenges to women's work prospects amidst COVID 19**', argued that even before the pandemic women already faced a century long wait to reach parity with men, a daunting prospect which now is at a bigger risk as economic disparities are further being unleashed. Women already bear a disproportionate burden and the burden has become heavier with closing of schools and increase in the house hold work. Women are also at the frontlines of the fight against the virus, making up 70% of the global health care workers and as much as 95% of long term care workers. Women employed in leisure and hospitality industries have been adversely affected as there are layoffs and pay cuts. She mentioned that regional framework, multilateral organizations and international financial institutions need to recognize that women play a critical role in resolving the crisis and that measures to address the pandemic and its economic fallout should include a gender perspective.

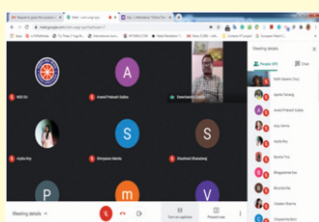
The second speaker was Prof. Shweta Prasad, delivering her talk on '**Concerns for gender equality, COVID-19**', highlighted how during the current crisis, gender based differences have become sharper. The International Labour Organization has warned that COVID-19 could wipe out progress made on gender equality at work, unequal distribution of unpaid work has increased during the pandemic. The violence against women has increased by 20% across the globe. She mentioned that the impact of the pandemic will remain longer in societies than anticipated. Therefore, policies framed during COVID need to be women centric.

The Webinar was attended by students, research scholars and faculty members from different Universities. On the basis of the feedback form a total number of six hundred and seventy two (672) persons participated in the Webinar. The Webinar also saw attendance from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The participants appreciated the topic of the Webinar and also found the arguments and discussion of the speakers very relevant. They suggested that another Webinar should be organized in which the participants should also be given a chance to share their views on the subject.

**Sikkim University**  
**National Service Scheme**  
**(NSS)**  
**Online Training on "Join the War against COVID-19"**  
**(June 24- July 1, 2020.)**

**Dr Nidhi Saxena , NSS Cordinator**

A six days online training on "Join the War against CoVID-19" was organised for the NSS Volunteers and students of Sikkim University from June 24 to July 1, 2020 with the objective to help volunteers in understanding the disease CoVID-19, vulnerabilities to the disease, prevention strategies, legal rules and regulations enacted to prevent the spread of disease and role of youth in such prevention. Another objective of the training was to motivate the volunteers and students in being prepared to play their roles in their local communities as and when required or if called upon by the administration/ authorities to tackle the scourge of CoVID- 19.

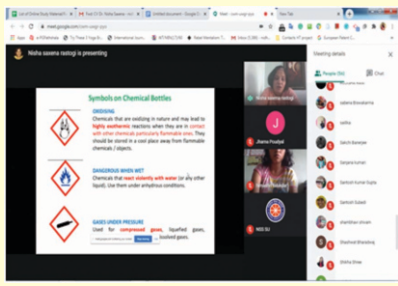


**The Inauguration Session was held on 24 June** in the presence of Registrar, Shri T.K. Kaul; Professor Manoj K Sinha, Hon'ble Director, Indian Law Institute Justice (Retd.) A. P. Subba, Hon'ble Chairperson, Sikkim Law Commission and Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Sikkim University, Professor Avinash Khare. In the inaugural session of this training program, Professor Manoj K Sinha explained the importance of internet connection and online mode of education in this pandemic situation. He pointed out the fundamental duties towards the society and mentioned that in remote places NSS volunteers are also working as frontline warriors. Justice (Retd.) A. P. Subba has eloquently explained the term "pandemic". He talked about the legal provisions that the (counties) are following to control the situation. He informed that in this kind of pandemic situation, it is not possible for the state to carry out all the responsibilities alone but the citizens have to come forward to deal with some of the issues. He asked the volunteers "If you want laws to protect you then you have to protect the laws". He appreciated the role that NSS volunteers of Sikkim University are performing during the lockdown period. The Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Sikkim University, Professor Avinash Khare and Registrar Sikkim University, communicated their best wishes for the program. (Moderator- Prantajyoti Biswas, Rapporteur- Arpita Roy)

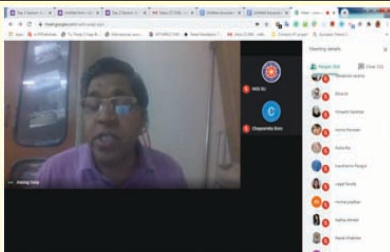
**The first day, 25<sup>th</sup> June** started with an understanding of what CoVID-19 is. The session was addressed by Dr. Namrata Thapa Tamang, Associate professor in the Zoology Department from Nar Bahadurbhandari Degree College and Dr. Nisha, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, M. R. M. College, Darbhanga. Dr. Nisha discussed safety measures and the safety symbols while Dr. Namrata Thapa Tamang explained the mechanism of the causation of Covid-19. She explained what a virus is and also; its structure - that it consists of nucleic acid and protein and that virus do not have enzymes. She also explained the life cycle of a virus where she explained that an obligatory parasite must attach itself to a host cell. She



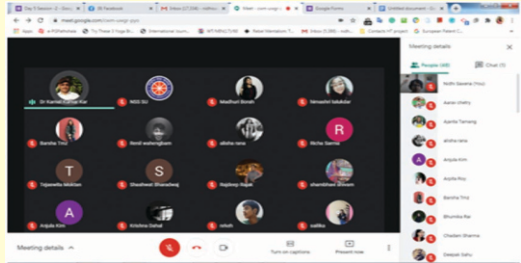
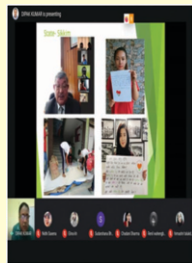
discussed the family of viruses, in particular, the corona virus. Various tips were provided to the volunteers for prevention of the spread of the disease which included staying at home and using alcohol based hand-sanitizers. (Moderator- Nikhil, Rapporteur- Arpita Roy)



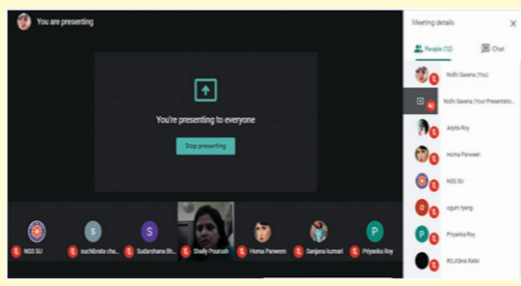
The Second day, 26<sup>th</sup> June, covered the Legislative measures during CoVID - 19. The session was addressed by Dr. Anurag Deep, Associate Professor in the Indian Law Institute. He discussed developing scientific temper, humanism, the spirit of inquiry and reforms. He added that there are five types of laws in India. 1. Constitutional laws 2. Parliamentary laws 3. Delegated laws 4. Judicial laws and Other laws. He further talked about the various legislations and their main provisions which are related to this pandemic situation. He discussed the provisions of various acts that have an impact on the social control of the pandemic. He discussed the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897; Disaster Management Act, 2005; 7<sup>th</sup> Schedules of Indian constitution; Fundamental Rights and duties; Directive Principles of our State Policy, Indian Penal Code and other laws.



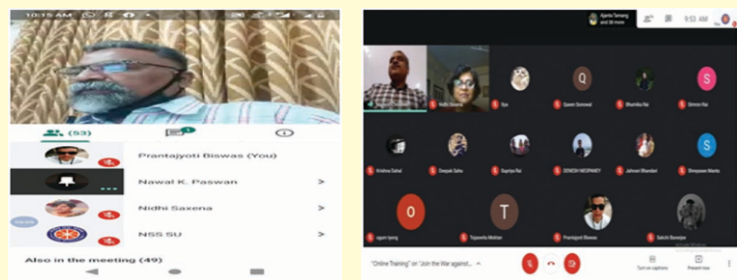
The Third day, of the training covered the role of NSS volunteer. There were two speakers in the session. Mr Dipak Kumar, Regional Director, National Service Scheme, North East Region, Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports and Dr. Kamal Kar, Assistant Program Advisor, NSS Head Quarter, New Delhi. Mr Dipak Kumar focused on explaining volunteerism. He explained the various dimensions of volunteerism including the difference between donation and volunteerism. The role of NSS Volunteers and youth as a field worker was explained to the participants with some excellent tips for enabling them to stand out as NSS Volunteers and do their rightful duties. Mr Deepak provided a glimpse of the different volunteering activities in the different North-Eastern states during this pandemic. Dr. Kamal Kar explained NSS and its origin. He said that since the last 50 years, NSS has always been a successful program. He explained the importance of resource management and financial management. He suggested volunteers to also focus on disaster management of both natural and manmade disasters. (Moderator- Nazat, Rapporteur- Nikhil and Iksha Rai)



Day Four, 28<sup>th</sup> June was addressed by Dr. Shaily Agarwal, MBBS, MS, FICOG, Associate Professor, Obs and Gynae, G.S.V.M. government Medical College, Kanpur. Dr. Agarwal informed the volunteers the origin of the disease, CoVID - 19. She mentioned the modes of transmission which are direct transmission (direct contact, droplet infection, contact with soil, inoculation into skin/mucosa), indirect transmission (air borne, fomites borne, unclean hand and finger). She mentioned the symptoms of CoVID - 19 that are fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, and headache but in case of elderly and pregnant women symptoms are fatigue, malaise, body ache, gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea and diarrhea. She suggested washing hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol based solution. She mentioned the proper use of the mask and method of reusing the mask. The myths surrounding the disease were also dealt by her. At the end of the session she shared her real experiences while treating Covid patients and said that what one needs to do first is that we have to be positive in any condition and that way this pandemic situation would cease to very soon. (Moderator- Prantajyoti Biswas, Rapporteur- Arpita Roy and Nikhil)

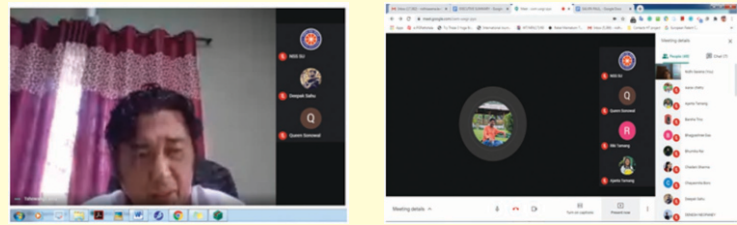


Day Five, 29<sup>th</sup> June, covered Economic Impact of COVID 19. The session was addressed by Professor Manesh Choubey, Department of Economics, Sikkim University and Professor Nawal K. Paswan, Dean of Schools of Social Sciences, Professor of Department of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management, Sikkim University. Professor Manesh Choubey gave insights on how the gross domestic product is greatly affected and how supply chains have been disrupted jeopardizing the demand and supply flow in the economy affecting the tax collection in India. Professor Dr Nawal Kishor Paswan stated how this pandemic has pushed back India's economic development resulting in induced market instability. The nationwide lockdown has caused unemployment of the masses, stress on supply chains, decrease in government income, collapse of tourism industry, collapse of hospitality industry, reduced consumer activity, plunge in fuel consumption and in general reduction in economic activities. (Moderator-Prastuti, Rapporteur-Simran and Pranta)



Day Six, 30<sup>th</sup> June was also addressed by two speakers. The speaker of the first session was Dr Salvin Paul, Assistant Professor, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies Management, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University and the second session was addressed by Dr. Tshewang Dorjee Lama. Dr. Salvin Paul deliberated on the topic of "leadership." He emphasized on the four factors of leadership which includes; 1) an honest understanding of who you really are, what you know and what you can do, 2) the followers are the ones who need to be convinced 3) different people require different type of leadership 4) when different situation arises, how a leader should deal with it. In the Second session, Dr. Tshewang Dorjee Lama talked on 'Domestic Legal Regime during Covid Crisis'. During this session, Dr. Tshewang talked about the importance of social distancing and also various laws and their importance. He also talked about the criminal laws having provisions of restricting the movement of people. He said NSS volunteers can play a major role in this pandemic. (Moderator- Simran Rai, Rapporteur- Iksha Rai)

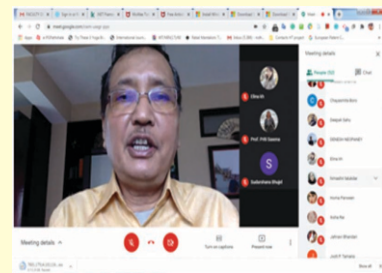
**Valedictory Session, 1<sup>st</sup> July:**The session was graced by Professor Jyoti Prakash Tamang, Professor, Department of Microbiology who was formerly the Dean of School of Life Sciences, Sikkim University and Professor PritiSaxena, Professor, Director, Center of Post Graduate Legal Studies, Department of Human Rights who was also a Former Dean, School for Legal Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University) Lucknow.



Professor Jyoti Prakash Tamang appreciated the NSS team for organising the training program for the students. In his valedictory speech, he focused on the important aspects of post Covid-19. In this context he highlighted the online mode of learning which has been in use since the lockdown was imposed on March. He swiftly talked about a virus, how it is the smallest yet most hazardous organism in the world and how it



lives in the host in relation to the RNA and DNA. Prof PritiSaxena highlighted the role that NSSvolunteers are playing during the pandemic situation throughout the country. She deliberated on Right Duty relationship and asked everyone to perform their fundamental duty as enshrined in the Constitution of India.



**Valedictory Message from the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor Sikkim University, Professor AvinashKhare**

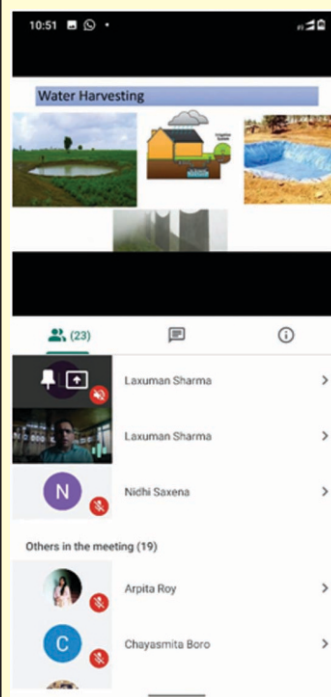


The Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor of Sikkim University, Dr. AvinashKhare sent out his message to the participants of the program which was read out by the NSS Coordinator Dr. Nidhi Saxena. In the message, Professor Khare appreciated the efforts of the NSS Cell in conducting the training for the NSS volunteers and students so as to prepare them for preventing the spread of Covid-19. He pointed out that NSS volunteers have done commendable relief work during natural calamities/emergencies such as cyclones, floods, famine, earthquake, tsunamis etc from time to time all over the country. The NSS Volunteers have also done useful work in organising campaigns for eradication of social evils, and popularization of the nationally accepted objectives like nationalism, democracy, secularism, social harmony and development of scientific temper.

He congratulated Dr. Nidhi Saxena and her team for successfully organizing the six days training program for the NSS Volunteers and wished health to the NSS volunteers, students, faculty members and administrative staff members of Sikkim University, their families and to the people of Sikkim. In the end, the vote of thanks was to be given by Dr. Dewchand Subba, Programme officer, Unit-II but due to technical issues, he was not able to do so and hence the NSS co-ordinator, Dr. Nidhi Saxena herself read out the vote of thanks on behalf of Dr. Subba. The session then officially came to an end. (Rapporteur- Iksha Rai, Moderator- Prantajyoti Biswas)

**Environmental Day, 2020**

**Dr. Nidhi Saxena, NSS Coordinator**



Sikkim University National Service Scheme (NSS) Cell observed 5<sup>th</sup> June as World Environment day with the theme "Celebrate Biodiversity". Sikkim University NSS formed 5 environmental protection teams from amongst the volunteers for the purpose of carrying out the objectives of 'World Environment Day'. 1. Sanitation and hygiene team, 2. Water conservation team, 3. Energy Conservation team, 4. Waste Management Team and 5. Greenery Team.

On 7th June NSS organized a webinar for Sikkim University's NSS environmental protection teams'volunteers on the topic of Jal Shakti Campus and Swachh Campus. The webinar was organized with an objective to guide the team of volunteers and create awareness amongst them. Registrar, Sikkim University Shri T K Kaul also participated in the session and delivered the key note address. In his address he emphasized on the importance of hygiene and cleanliness and pointed out the importance of clean

environment for healthy living. Dr Laxuman Sharma, Dean Student Welfare was the Resource Person and spoke on the impact of environment on agriculture. He discussed at length various aspects associated with the agriculture and environment with some very pertinent examples.