

Social Distancing or Physical Distancing: An Imposed Moral Dilemma in People of India

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Abstract

The outbreak of pandemic COVID-19 in different countries including India is intensifying and leading to take urgent measures on priority to prevent the spread of the virus to the Humankind. The important steps have necessitated the immediate adoption of measures to ensure social distancing in order to prevent the transmission of the virus. Every individual of the world is expected to cooperate in the implementation of such measure steps designed to reduce the transmission of the virus. Scaling down the challenges that associated with the outbreak of COVID-19 the conventional operations within the precincts comes first which necessary to ensure compliance with social distancing guidelines issued from time to time by various health authorities and Government. Become an exception during this period Social distancing term faced with the unprecedented and extraordinary outbreak of moral dilemma in people. It is necessary that Social Scientists as guardian of the society at all levels respond to the call of the people on social or physical distancing and ensure that the measures adopted to control the spread of virus by issuing directions and taking recourse between both.

Keywords: COVID-19; Social distancing; Physical distancing; Virus; Pandemic.

How to cite this article:

Banita Behera, Abhishikta Ghosh Roy, M.R.Gangadhar/Social Distancing or Physical Distancing : An Imposed Moral Dilemma in People of India2021;7(1):31-36.

Introduction

Understanding the risks before us now requires a sophisticated environmental perspective that cause and cure driven medicine does not communicate well to consumers. The very successes of modern biomedicine facilitate both a false sense of security among those who expect to benefit, and a deep resentment among those who see technological

progress as a threat (Anderson et.al., 2020). The illusion of safety among the currently privileged will further distance them from worries and fears that could mobilize resources to prevent novel pandemics. On the other hand, many people, when presented with a threat or crisis, will accept simplifying, familiar explanations from the past because the political and technological solutions adopted in a crisis threaten their livelihoods and

social well-being (Medicine Io., 2006). Unfortunately, many people may repeat past emotions and behaviours because they may not completely understand how current global changes differ from the agrarian age of major epidemics. But they can easily grasp that the benefits of future breakthrough technologies will surely be inequitably distributed, disparities which reinforce the human experience of centuries (Brooks et al., 2020).

The risk scenario underlines the need for concerted efforts towards comprehensive risk reduction and planning. In the current context, the outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19 has adversely affected the public role in social distancing which is the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19 (Willen et al., 2020).

Since the spread is through droplets from coughing and sneezing the distance from person to person physically is most important. But does it so! If you keep your distance from others physically but socially and using the term social distancing? as an alternative, the word may be replaced by other terms such as "physical distancing" or "safe distancing" (Abukar et al., 2012). It's a kind of dilemma and important for everyone to be clarified. The extra layer of security for the citizens was arranged in railway stations, airports and other emergency public places across the world in the line of duty (Desclaux et al., 2017). The term has not only disrupted the usual functioning of the psycho-social system of society but has also raised several challenges. The word according to many social scientists attached with mental stigma, pointing out that people became socially distanced from each other by caged themselves in their respective house despite the fact that they became more actively closed through social Medias. With "Social distancing" being promoted for containing the spread of Corona virus, people have begun advocating themselves under the guise of social distancing (Hatchett et al., 2007).

Of course Social distancing is precautions for maintenance and preservation of cure from the disease and its spread. And to overcome these challenges, the occurrence of pandemic has to be considered as an opportunity to relook operations planning and developing it as a platform of solace for the public. Various other reforms like controlled entry and exit behavior, increasing the visiting hours of museums in order to restrict overcrowding at a single time. The lack of human resources is the major concern in the current context of raging pandemic and there is a need for integrated disaster planning for complex emergencies (Zhu et al., 2020).

Social Distancing or Physical Distancing?



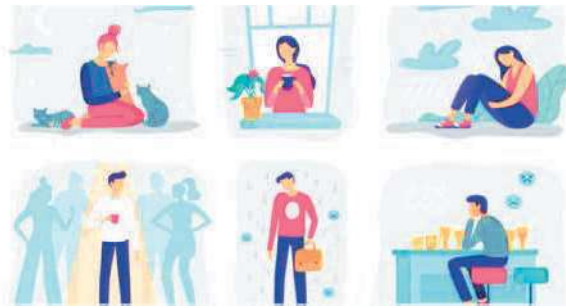
Fig. 1: People maintaining physical distancing to buy essential goods.

Social distancing or Physical distancing? this confusion has raised a raft of questions for many researchers and anthropologists, pertaining to their corroboration in relevance in pandemic situations. How can a term *Social distancing* can be serve to the entire nation, without knowing its complete version? This may be a crucial question, but the entire fertility of Anthropology fall within the remit of this concept and its role in entire human community. Social distance is generally understood in a unique social, logical concept irreducible to special or biological which is in terms of genetic distance.

Social distancing now declared as the Brahmastra (lord Brahma's weapon) to control the Novel Corona Virus. But what exactly it is? Social distancing or Physical distancing ? that need to clarify. The activity of blending socially with others in an exceedingly public or private place is basically called socializing? According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "*The definition of health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*" The health of any community is determined by the interaction of people's health consciousness, socio-cultural, demographic, economic, educational, and political factors. Sociologists are found a most congenial concept even if they have given it all kinds of incompatible meanings. The first used of the Distance in Sociology was given by *Gabriel Tarde* who in his laws of imitation referred to the class difference. Social distance underlies two important distances majorly physical and psychological. *Simmel and Durkheim* subsequently used and found the significance of the concept of social distance but it was Bogardus who analyzed it psychologically.

Now that the globe is confined in their various homes, humans may still show their love and affection to their friends and family; if we are all

socially tied and united with each other, how can we argue that we are socially distanced? In this digital era we can't say that we are distanced rather it made the entire community at same level. People now migrant and for food walking miles and miles like early hunters and gatherers following this lockdown and social distancing. But at the same time the entire human community is developing the trust factor among each other and psychologically became close. For example the parents who supposed to talk their children those staying in abroad once in a week now due to this epidemic and lockdown situation they are frequently connecting to their children to aware themselves about their safety. People even doing their marriages over video calls which proving that socially and mentally we became more close than distance. This situation makes us realize who we were and from where and how we came to this stage.



The term social distance incorporates material and personal distance, physical distance is a distance or isolation between two individuals where as a personal distance is a distance at which of people begin to encroach on each other's territory of personal space (Li et al., 2020). A psychological distance incorporate to perceive differences in innovation temperaments abilities moods and states where is the interest distance perceived distance is what and how a person wants or goals to achieve it thus when we alternatively used the term Social distance, we are generally mean to use it as a social distance or we are trying to main physical distance by its connotation (Phan et al., 2020). A physical distance personal distance psychological distance and cultural distance all are interrelated and interdependent and overlap in those different aspects of distances they describe. Social distance subdivisions class status and power distances and the later are observed by the status distance (Zong et al., 2008). Distance as a concept can mislead unless we keep in mind three assumptions involved in this use assumptions about commonality behavior and directionality. Concerning commonality a distance assume that there is something common between individuals which can be

compared in some quantitative or qualitative fashion. The second point is distance concept is behavioral it is often assume that the greater the distance the more antagonism dislike hostility and conflict and less the distance the more solidarity cooperation affinity and so on. And finally the distance concept assumes directionality in virtually all the social science literature employing distance it is a unit to measure only the magnitude of degree of similarity and dissimilarity between the two people on some commonality (Anderson et al., 2019).

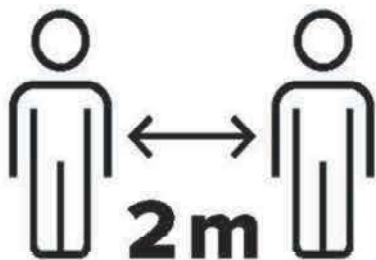
Social distances are but the most formal and general aspects of social relationships, and social relationships are the result of social processes, social distance with therefore be defined as a condition produced by a social relationship in conjunction with other social relationships. In other words, any specific social distance is the result of at least two relationships with opposing tendencies; however, because a social relationship is simply a relatively stable state of association or dissociation among human beings brought about and maintained by one or more social processes, it is impossible to define it in terms of distance. Does any social process is a sequence of occurrences through which the distance prevailing between human beings is increased or decreased? Importance of social distance as a sociological category thereby comes apparent it is relative least stable equilibrium produced by the dynamic interplay of social processes.

Bio-Social model

"In fact, biology is chaos. Biological systems are the product not of logic but of evolution, an inelegant process. Life does not choose the logically best design to meet a new situation. It adapts what already exists. The result, unlike the clean straight lines of logic, is often irregular, messy." John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Story of The Deadliest Pandemic in History*.

When we discuss about Social distancing as per Bio-Social model it is a dimension of interaction between members of different groups ranging from intimacy to complete separation no contact. It is defined by norms governing the situation in which interaction with members of the out-groups is permissible (Sheriff and Sheriff 1969). Behavioural interaction is the result of mutual hostility and contemporary attitude towards each other. It is also known that social distance is a cause of intergroup relations, prejudice, attitude and stereotypes and on the other hand they are further caused by social distance too. Long back in the year 1963 Edward hall a cultural anthropologist have coined the term proxemics. Proxemics de-

finds studies regarding social distancing in day to day life at that point of time nobody could even imagine that a small virus maybe more than hundred times smaller than even bacteria would hamper human closeness and would create such a big problem. At the time, Hall was concerned about human intimacy and predicted that the closeness and proximity of two individuals would enhance visual, aural, or olfactory stimulation to the point that some people would feel intruded upon and respond negatively.



Since our evolutionary split from chimpanzees around 7 million years ago human have become more increasingly dependent on complex social operation to survive and thrive. People sometimes think of human as fundamental selfish or violent but anthropological research shows that we have evolved to what cooperative life and live in supportive communities. Under ordinary circumstances these interpersonal distance chosen by human beings depends on various attitudes towards each other which includes gender age and even ecology. If you go back to the term social distancing it is not just a concept in sociology or Social Anthropology it has a long-term significance in ethology which means the study of animal behaviour. From this warming of insects to the massive migration of mammals including birds there are copious instances of non-human collective behaviour. The social club clusters invariably features some dynamic of distancing by which specific attractions to each other are mediated by a countervailing force of repulsion. There is a direct conflict between the public health requirement to “socially distance” and the natural human desire for social interaction (Cohen, 2004). Classic attachment theory suggests that humans (and other primates) have an innate and natural desire for social and physical contact, that begins from early life (Bowlby, 1979). Furthermore, the mental health consequences of social isolation (Harlow et al., 1965) cannot be ignored in the quest to suppress infectious diseases: there is significant comorbidity of anxiety and depression in Australia, with elderly people being chronically affected (Almeida et al, 2012) Jiang et al., 2020 summarised that it remains and clear that how individuals act together to form a cohesive social group and how social distance is regulated or main-

tained. He also highlights the significance of the role of multiple sensory inputs in shaping a social spacing in terms of Social Distancing.



Safety precautions by Airport Authority of India

Though the after effect of social distancing might be individuals having problems with loneliness anxiety depression substance abuse or other health problems which are likely to be vulnerable to more problems. Because of its universality, social distance is an aspect of human behaviour that is particularly significant to epidemiology; by modifying their behaviours, anyone can reduce their contact rates with other people, and less human contact reduces the transmission of many diseases. Theoretical study on social distance has been sparked by studies of agent-based influenza simulations, which show that tiny changes in behaviour can have a huge impact on transmission patterns during an epidemic.

Need to acknowledge the demonstrated values of Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous orals

Most tribal communities define health, medical care and aetiology of disease in relation to social context and cultural context. Diseases such as measles, chicken pox, unsafe delivery, snake bite, fever, typhoid, malaria, pneumonia, tetanus, fits are believed to be caused by evil spirits and curse of gods (Singh 2008).

A study by Pramuk & Palkumar (2006: 4) among most of the tribes of the Eastern Ghats and Odisha found existence of belief that ‘whenever any person is possessed by evil spirits, the person’s pulse becomes very weak and his/her hands become as cold as ice and the patient appears “difficulty in breathing and restless’ and they resort to treatment by performing rituals (which are often dramatic) to cure the patients. Hence the symptoms of COVID-19 is somehow a spirit possession over the humanity, they believe. The social distancing is not new to the tribal communities though since hundreds of years they are following this common belief as traditional customs and practices related to control the disease in their community/ area. In most of the tribal and ru-

ral societies of Southern and Northern Odisha the person affected with Leprosy, Filariasis, Measles are instructed by the village head not to take bath from the local pond and allowed to take bath in the bottom side bed of the river and in upper bed the other villagers can take bath. They keep the patient in a isolated house of the village end in the side of the Coriolis effect of wind so that the virus can flow to the outwards of the village causes from infected respiratory droplets.

Pandemic always failed to defeat Curators: way to aware minds about Social / Physical distancing

Physical distancing limiting the entire world from close contact with each others where as to support the cause of social distancing museums across the world are offering free virtual tools on exhibits to be enjoyed from home that is inspiring people to be occupied at home along with to stay curious. People are unable to walk out of their respective homes and walking to the different museums to have a perfect view of the exhibits the respective museums. Social distancing has restricted people movements but museums are not restricted they have always taken the initiative to reach out to people by any means.

Now many parts of the world perpetuate deeper misconceptions about what the purpose of physical distancing. Reinforcing the correct assumption at the heart of this tension the world museum fraternity ways to highlight and bridge two of the most important roles museums have: as sources and spaces for scholarly communication (in other words, museums as knowledge repositories) and as places for society communication and awareness (museums as sources of informative entertainment) about pandemic situations.



Public school children approaching the north and south entrances of the American Museum of Natural History to visit the International Tuberculosis Exhibition in 1909. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

History says the American Museum of Natural History and the Smithsonian developed and hosted two exhibitions about tuberculosis: its etiology in 1905 and 1909. How it spread, and the damage it could cause in those who contracted it, supplemented by illustrated pamphlets about prevention and self-care in languages like Chinese, Yiddish, and Italian with Big signs like read "Don't Spit." An exhibition on "Tuberculosis" was the first blockbuster in US museum history, a harbinger for other popular shows with social relevance. Although today no one would think its a good idea for people of India too to go through a virtual exhibition of COVID-19, means and importance of Social/Physical distancing. This public service effort of Indian Museum fraternity during this epidemic will be an example of how, during crisis, museums forged a new role for themselves as trustworthy educational institutions to control this psychological disturbance raising in our society. Stayat Home, Stay Safe, Washhands, Cooperate-doctors & police etc messages were stretched and spread beyond capacity to the citizens of India. Apart from social distancing , Isolation, remoteness such many largely unaffected concepts are there which may be a part of the developmental process going on in India during this pandemic situation.

Suggestions

"Forget 'social distancing.' The WHO prefers we call it 'physical distancing' because social connections are more important than ever" (WHO). Though many physical experts, Doctors and other experts prefers to use the term Physical distancing because "social distancing" can involve a sense of disconnection from their closed ones. "We've been saying 'physical distancing' because it's important to remain physically separate but socially connected," (Maria Van Kerkhove, Epidemiologist). Finding a way to be socially connected to the near and dears staying physically away is more important. As per the view of the psychologists the absence of physical contact among human connection can take a psychological toll which we are regularly watching in news and social media. Human as social being can remain socially connected even while being apart physically but practicing of distant socializing is ironically accurate. The phrase 'Social Distancing' keeping experts away from the argument since it is widely popularised by social media and Govt. Institutions now shifting to different terminology may create confusion among people.

Whether its Social or Physical Distancing the brownie point is that keeping in the view the comparison of COVID with other historical epidemics

this action is the only way to control COVID as per its increase speed. After many more clinical trials till now we are unable to kick that into gear hence social distancing is master plan as of now. The important thing is that we acted as we believed this virus would transmit person to person with minimum distancing and that's exactly what we are following Social Distancing. Can we do better than this? . The bottom line is that the description of this Social/ physical distancing may reduce the curve of this pandemic without changing the actions.

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