

A Report on Webinar

कोरोनाविरुद्धची लढाई आम्ही जिंकणारच -हम होंगे कामयाब (We Shall Overcome)

Sunday, 2nd May, 2021

Time: 5 to 7 pm

Organized by

**Mahatma Gandhi Peace Centre, Postgraduate NSS Unit B60 and Mumbai Vidyapeeth
Karmachari Sangh**

The Mahatma Gandhi Peace Center, Postgraduate NSS Unit B 60 and Mumbai University Karmachari Sangh had organized a webinar on COVID-19 'We Shall Overcome' under the initiative of University Social Responsibility (USR) on 02/05/2021. The long-standing commitment of UGC towards strengthening social responsibility and community engagement in Higher Education Institutions in India has led to the development of USR program. It attempts to foster meaningful and respectful partnerships between the university and the community, where the ownership and benefits of accruing results are mutual.

On 2nd May 2021, Sunday, a webinar was conducted to discuss the cognitive responses to stress in this difficult time of pandemic in the form of anxiety, depression and grief, and to suggest various ways to deal with and heal the mind. Prof. Rajesh Kharat, Dean of Humanities, was the chief guest for this webinar, Dr. Satishchandra Kumar, coordinator-Mahatma Gandhi Peace Center, Dr. Aparna Phadke, coordinator- B60-NSS Unit, Mr. Rupesh Malusare, Mumbai Vidyapeeth Karmachari Sangh were present as the representatives of the organizing committee. Dr. Juhi Deshmukh, Assistant Professor at Pune University and Ms. Shital Ravi Counselor at Disha Counselling Center, were the invited speakers. The seminar was attended by 58 colleagues

from the non-teaching staff. Many officers like Deputy Registrar and Assistant Registrar of various administrative departments also in attendance.

The session was structured like a dialogue, where Dr. Juhi Deshmukh spoke about the reasons for various mental complications and mental health related issues. Dr. Sheetal Ravi focused on the discussion of coping mechanisms to deal with the situation, for instance, meditation through which one can attain mental peace. In this dialogue, the moderator Dr. Aparna Phadke presented certain common questions. Time for a question-and-answer round was given to participants to share their feeling and doubts.

Dr. Aparna Phadke opened the session with the introduction of the topic and the need for this discussion in these testing times. After throwing light on the importance and relevance of this session, she handed over the lead to Professor Satishchandra Kumar to present the conceptual discussion of the webinar.

Dr. Satishchandra Kumar expressed his gratitude towards the authorities of the University of Mumbai, who provide support to such webinars for the welfare of humanity. He mentioned that without the collaboration of the Mahatma Gandhi Peace center, B60-NSS unit and Mumbai Vidyapeeth Karmachari Sangh, the idea to reach people amid this pandemic would not have seen the light of the day. He stressed the ethos of Mumbai University that instructs everyone to support each other and be in this institution as a community. He talked about the importance of mental health along with physical health in this highly distressing situation. While discussing the concept note, he expressed that such discussions are needed to set the healing process in a correct

manner in the people who are affected directly and indirectly and also to have a poise restoration. He handed over then the session to Dr. Aparna Phadke for the proceedings.

Dr. Aparna Phadke thanked Dr. Satishchandra Kumar for unveiling the purpose of this session. She then welcomed the speakers Dr. Juhi Deshmukh and Ms. Shital Ravi to initiate a dialogue. She also welcomed Mr. Rupesh Malusare, a member of the non-teaching staff union and invited him to speak about this event.

Mr. Rupesh Malusare began by thanking the organizers, Dr. Aparna Phadke and Dr. Satishchandra Kumar, for coming up with such a programme for the non-teaching staff. He spoke about the COVID -19 situation and its effects on teaching and non-teaching staff employed at Mumbai University. He stated that the situation was terrible for non-teaching staff members as they had to come to the office on alternate days and had no scope of online work. He cited that many colleagues were being infected with COVID and some of them had even lost their lives. He also brought to view the vaccination drive carried out by the union members wherein they have vaccinated more than 1200 university employees, comprising of teaching, non-teaching and administrative staff. He thanked Dr. Juhi Deshmukh and Ms. Shital Ravi, for investing their time to support the non-teaching staff members. After underlining the objective of this session, he handed over the session to Dr. Aparna Phadke. Dr. Phadke delightedly expressed her gratitude towards Mr. Rupesh to maintain a cordial relationship between the teaching and non-teaching staff and to extend his support in this event. Dr. Phadke invited Dr. Rajesh Kharat, Dean of Humanities, to say a few words about the programme.

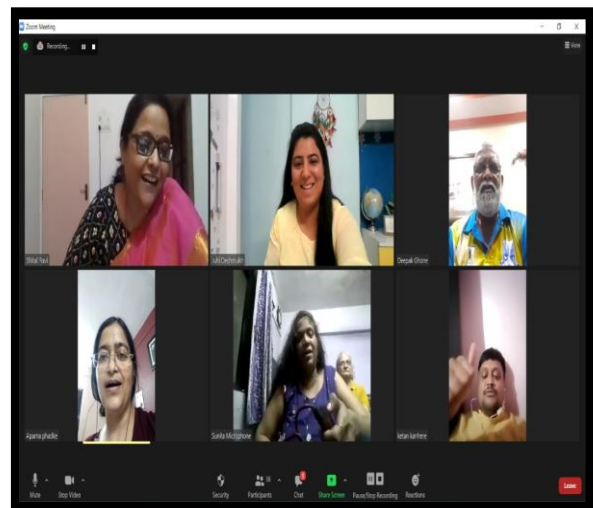


Prof. Rajesh Kharat addressed the participants and stressed the importance and role of non-teaching staff at the university. He appreciated the strength these members provide to the teaching faculty and their commitment to the smooth operation of

various duties in these difficult times. He congratulated the organizers who have taken this initiative for the well-being of the society and the community in these unprecedented times. He welcomed all the participants and asked Dr. Aparna Phadke to commence the dialogue.

Dr. Aparna Phadke took charge and introduced the speakers for the session, Dr. Juhi Deshmukh and Ms. Shital Ravi. Dr. Juhi Deshmukh is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology, University of Pune and Ms. Shital is a counsellor at Disha Counselling Center. After presenting highlights from the account of both the speakers, she invited Dr. Juhi Deshmukh to start the session. Dr. Juhi Deshmukh commenced her session by acknowledging the present situation, which accumulates stress and anxiety

in everyone and how people have experienced the loss of life since the beginning of COVID-19. A video on the effects of the pandemic was compiled and shown by Dr. Juhi, which brought tears in the eyes of everyone. The collage of migrant workers standing in long queues at the railway station, cremation grounds full of



burning dead bodies, quiet roads and markets, and people crying over their loss of near and dear

ones inserted deep in everyone's heart. It also showed how the frontline workers are struggling with their lives to keep the public safe at all times. The song 'Yeh Hosla Kaise Juke, Yeh Aarzo Kaise Ruke' supported this video to motivate the participants to surpass their negativity and find hope. It touched every participant who witnessed the similar condition around them during these unfortunate times. The second speaker, Ms. Shital explained that how every individual was attempting to seek protection for their near and dear ones. During this time, so much stress is getting accumulated all the time in the personal and family space. She stressed on the factors that are under one's control like taking precaution and maintaining the hygiene and cleanliness. These are the ways in which one can assure hygienic environment in the home as well as at the work place. She emphasized and demonstrated how one can change the self-talk to beat anxiety and fear. She further suggested to continue to engage in physical and mental exercises whenever and however it is possible.

Dr. Juhi then explained how human beings keep fear hidden and do not express it openly. She stated that the people remain in the shadow of fear of COVID complications. So, they constantly use various types of equipment such as oximeter to check the oxygen level and thermometers to check their body temperature again and again. This fear alleviates other psychosomatic diseases like diabetes, blood pressure and so on. She suggested that people could do some meditation and yoga. Fear also impacts children so they should be heard, and their queries must be answered in the best possible way, to enable them to understand the situation; they too can practice yoga.

Ms. Shital Ravi spoke about how anxiety is a result of overthinking. She commented that a lot depends on how you handle your emotions. People should vent their feelings, which can be done

by speaking with friends, meeting on Zoom or WhatsApp and discussing non-COVID related topics. One must laugh and share happy moments. Another way is to involve oneself in long term plans as this would be a perspective to look forward to. This helps the mind to think in a positive direction. She recommended everyone to build good relationships with family members and play games, eat meals together to reduce anxiety and improve the feeling of togetherness and collective spirit. She advised the participants that if this does not help and they still feel anxious, it is good to seek the help of a counselor medication, just as you would do if you had any other ailment. Dr. Aparna Phadke, who was conversing with the speakers, also made a few suggestions like reading books to relieve anxiety and stress and to divert attention.

The discussion continued with Dr. Juhi, who explained the situation where someone gets infected and tests positive. She stressed how the person who is Covid positive feels helpless, guilty and blames himself/herself for everything happening to him/her and around him/her. Negative thoughts often occupy the person like 'what will happen', 'how will my family manage if something happens to me' and so on. Many have lost their loved ones but have experienced incomplete grief as this situation does not allow one to even mourn properly. In fact, extended family and friends cannot even come to console and sympathize the grieving near ones. She advised that people should seek help to relieve stress, guilt and regain mental health. One should not sit alone if feeling depressed as this will harm the person's physical and psychological health.

Dr. Aparna Phadke seconded her by saying that people should not hesitate to express their emotions that may not be acceptable socially, for example men cannot cry. Social and

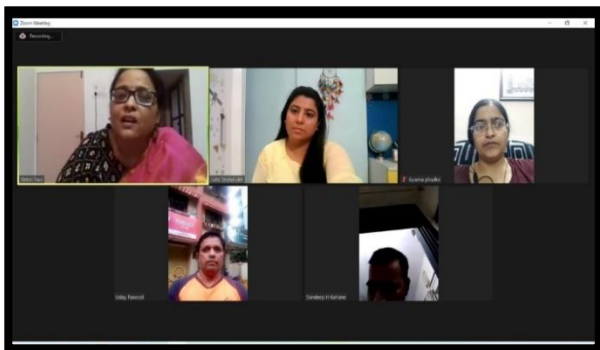
psychological stigmas should not become hurdles in the way of expressing emotions that disturb the mind and the body. She requested Ms. Shital to throw some light on this subject.

Ms. Shital then touched on a sensitive topic of 'how to handle death'. She suggested that one should not stay in the denial phase for long, and that acceptance of reality is essential. Grief should be expressed and spoken about, and closure of grief must be done through various ways, for instance, talking therapies. One can organize a condolence meeting even on Zoom to help the family to accept their loss as the regular customary practices cannot be undertaken to complete the grieving process. She added that one should not stay silent but speak about it so that it becomes an accepted fact.

Dr. Aparna shared her experience of losing a loved one and how she blamed herself for a long time, and later overcame it. This is a prevalent scenario in these infected times where people start blaming themselves for not taking care of a person on time, and after the loss of his/her life experience guilt. She asked Dr. Juhi what she had learnt from this pandemic.

Dr. Juhi replied that she learnt to live in the present and cherish each moment. It is important to forgive, be thankful and not worry too much about tomorrow. Be grateful for what you have in life and stay hopeful. After Dr. Juhi's encouragement, Ms. Shital also stressed that one should live in the moment, 'Here and Now', hold relationships, stay happy and love one another. On similar lines, Dr. Aparna added that we should not complain even in this difficult hour. This pandemic has taught us how one should always think rationally and analyze the situation by applying the logic of "things within control" and "things beyond control".

Then the session opened to questions from the participants. Mr. Rupesh Malusare took the initiative and asked the speakers how to handle fear that emerges after hearing the news about many youngsters are dying around. On this query, Ms. Shital replied that he should not let the fear captivate or cover his optimistic approach towards life. Young individuals may look physically strong but there are several other factors like mental health, promptness in decision making regarding seeking medical help, etc. One should always understand the context of the situation and not only focus on the result. Dr. Juhi added that we usually check how many died, but we fail to see how many survived. So, that data is required to be checked to avoid a panic state.



On this note, Ms. Shital requested all the participants to join her for a short 10 minutes mindfulness session. She played her pre-recorded audio for the participants, where she instructed them to follow the steps in this process of mental exercise along with few

breathing techniques. All the participants followed her and enjoyed this session thoroughly.

Mr. Rupesh Malusare and Mr. Sandip expressed their experience of feeling relaxed and peaceful after the meditation session. To conclude the session, Dr. Phadke presented the vote of thanks. She thanked Dr. Rajesh Kharat, Dean of



Humanities, for taking the time to be present for this webinar and to share his valuable insights on the current scenario. She conveyed her gratitude to Dr. Satishchandra Kumar for always readily accepting the invitation to collaborate to organize such thoughtful events. She extended her appreciation to all the participants for actively participated in the event. After the vote of thanks, she requested everyone to switch on their mics and accompany her for a motivational prayer to end the session on an optimistic note. All sung together 'Hum Hongey Kamyab, Hum Hongey Kamyab Ek Din...Maan Mein Hai Vishwash Poora Hai Vishwash Hum Hongey Kamyab" which was related to the theme of the webinar 'We Shall Overcome'.

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