

Take A Deep Breath, Listen To The God Within You In The Time Of COVID-19: Subroto Bagchi

OdishaTV.in

Mar 26, 2020

By Mrunal Manmay Dash

Bhubaneswar: Stay home, stay safe, exercise self-control and build affiliation with your government when the country is under lockdown, said Odisha govt's spokesperson on COVID-19, Subroto Bagchi in an exclusive interview with Kasturi Ray, Senior Editor of OTV (Digital).

Ironically the same man who wrote 'Go, Kiss The World', is now an advocator of 'stay indoors, stay safe.' Being the spokesperson on the State govt's response to the Coronavirus outbreak, Bagchi is keeping a close tab on the developments. Bagchi took some time out for OTV to share information about the pandemic and Odisha's response so far.

Here are the excerpts...

Odisha has been swift in responding to Covid-19 challenge. What are the reasons you think are behind Odisha being a low Covid-19 burdened state in the country?

Bagchi: We have been proactive and responded with as much capacity as needed. That's because the state of Odisha has a history of dealing with natural disasters and the authorities take a lot of pride in that ability. The system is saying that it's the time to take charge, but that being said, I must caution against thinking that the battle is even half won.

The reason for that is fairly simple. We are not an island. Except for the eastern border, Odisha is surrounded by other states on all other sides. So our reality and the national reality would be same at some point of the time. So this is no time for complacency. Yes, we are satisfied with the steps taken so far, but it's a battle of at least six months and we have to be prepared for large scale manifestation of the virus.

We have been doing a good job so far, I must appreciate the efforts of state government for that. The number of cases reported in Odisha is pretty less in comparison to other states but as you stated earlier, the future numbers could be alarming. Do you think that would increase the lockdown period even more?

Bagchi: I have said that it's going to be a six-month battle, but it doesn't mean lockdown. The current lockdown is for 21 days, thanks to the bold steps taken by PM Modi, which is absolutely consistent with what we had proactively thought about. If we can make people stay in their homes for this period, we will break the chain of this virus. The virus typically manifests itself in 14 days. The median of external manifestation of somebody contaminated with the virus is five days, but there are people who show signs all the way up to 12 days. So 21-day lockdown is a reasonable period to build a national defense against the virus. But there will be other unintended consequences. There will be a 'new normal' and our ability to deal with the 'new normal' will take at least six months. For example, when 9/11 happened, the theatre of the action was far more concentrated largely at US, Middle-East and Afghanistan. But the repercussion of it took almost 4-5 years for the world to come back from heightened alert at the airports, which has now become the 'new normal' to the global economy coming back where people got busy with their lives. The difference between 9/11 and now is that it's a pandemic. The theatre of action in this situation is no longer limited to one country or two countries.

Also Read: Lord Jagannath In Lockdown For 144-Yrs, Covid-19 Lockdown Mere 8-Days: Bagchi

If we are to be prepared for six months, would you expect people to blindly trust somebody speaking to them?

Bagchi: When you look at calamities in the history of this planet, the first thing that happens according to the psychologists is an 'affiliation breakdown'. We human beings are genetically designed to seek affiliation. When I ask you to not come to office from tomorrow and work from home, there is an affiliation breakdown. And when affiliation breaks down people usually seek new affiliation. That's why PM Modi was inviting people to affiliate with him through his speech. Trust comes after affiliation and people tend to trust who they can affiliate with. When affiliation breaks down, anger kicks in, because they don't know what's going on. In that chaos, two sides of a person's

character come out. There is both God and demon in the same man. Right now God is acting through the medical fraternity, who are taking enormous risk in dealing with the disease. Then there are 1%-2% of people who manifest their demonic behavior by hoarding food supplies and breaking the law. So in times like these we need to create new affiliations to contain the anger.

How far do you think people are going to accept PM Modi's call for 'Restraint' and your call for being cautious in consumption?

Bagchi: Both the State and Central governments have been harping on the fact that essential supplies will continue. We have been saying that unless the situation really goes out of the hands, we'll make sure that the supply chain continues. But irrespective of the supply chain and the assurance by the government, this is the time to exercise 'Sanyam'(Restraint). As an individual, I need to see how I can do with less. We need to conserve our supplies in case this journey lasts even longer and we need to conserve for others as well who might not be as privileged as we are. But in this process, we feel pain as nobody likes sacrifices in their lives.

And we don't tend to see other's pain in this scenario.

Bagchi: Very beautifully put. As a young father I realized very early in my life, through a personal experience, that our ability to deal with pain is directly connected to our ability to see pain elsewhere. We might be able to pay for all the luxuries in the world, but there are people who would starve to death if they don't get supplies in time. So we have to realize that these are the times we have to deal with personal pain.

How do you assess the situation in Odisha and what message you would like to give to the people.

Bagchi: The first thing should be the trust that humanity will come out of this situation. There will be some damage, but largely, humanity will prevail. The second important thing would be to trust the system. In times like these, the system might not be apparent to you all the time, but please understand that there is Central Government which is most powerful. This might be an unscripted situation and nobody is trained to deal with a situation of this

magnitude, but people should know that the best people in the government are working.

Read More: [Covid-19 Odisha: State Govt Orders 14-Day Home Quarantine For 78K Migrant Workers](#)

Then there is a state government that has dealt with disasters routinely and has earned the respect of the entire world. The people manning this situation are not only competent enough; they take great pride in doing so. We will not let any stone unturned if there is anything that needs to be done.

Despite the fact that we know reasonably well how to contain this epidemic, we are not God. There will be a mistake somewhere, but in times like that, don't panic, don't get cynical, don't listen to the demon inside you. Take a deep breath and listen to the God within you.