

the people. Any opposition, contest opposition etc., can be silenced with the aid of the police or the judiciary. Yet if there is no consensus of the people, such a state may crumble. For that matter, even a tyrant will crumble. What we witness nowadays is the extent to which autocratic acts, whether one wishes or not, can go. Any new party-interest can become a law or a rule without democratic procedures. In the name of covid, lockdowns and covid protocols, any compelling political voice can be silenced. Any active protest against the state, legitimate or not, has become an impossibility. Authority requires no legitimisation. The introduction of any new forms of exercise of power also does not require legitimisation. Parliaments can pass any kind of passes for the privileged in terms of the ruling parties.

When speaking about subjectivity, self (not the Self) and the 'other' fall in place. There is a process of othering in conjunction with self-centralisation. One's health care is tantamount to the health of others, especially in the time of the spread of the corona virus. We are led to recognise our self-identity in terms of the corona affected. One is subjected to oneself as well as to others. That is, there is a process of subjectification/subjectivation. That is, one is at the same time subjected to others as in the sovereignty model and subjected to oneself as in Foucault's formulation. **Servitude is to the coronavirus and corona effect**, this is accompanied by an acute fear of self and the others, obsessive-compulsive behaviour, exclusiveness, suspicion disorder, paranoia and so on. Relations between forces (an action upon another action or exercise of power) occur from above as well from below and also from the unidentified realms. There is a connection between how individuals are medico-politically objectified and activation of the

technologies of self; This connectivity integrates the objectives of the state and the objectives of clinical-care seeking individuals. Discourses of medical care consisting of epidemiology, social medicine, public health and so on are almost unavoidable and medical practitioners are the most sought-after saviours. State and corporate claim the authorship of these discursive practices, while the responsibility of being away from the reach of the infection or taking care of the sick due to covid is left to individuals. It should be remembered that, in the earlier days of the corona, the responsibility of taking care of corona affected people and people in touch with them was the state's obligation. The state also provided quarantine centers. Now the state is only an institution which informs and warn people about how to prevent the spread of corona. Of course, at the beginning vaccinating people was also undertaken by the state free of cost. However, states do take initiative in vaccinating people but private hospitals/clinics are permitted to vaccinate people; but the cost has to be met by the people who vaccinate in the private hospitals/clinics.

Existing forms of sovereignty or exercise of power from above is not questioned or appealed to curtail excessive state power as it used to be during pre-covid times of the liberal polity. The state gives itself the objective of promoting its strength along with taking care of the health of its subjects. Individual interests converge in the production of public interest. Forces of reasons of state (therapeutic and economic) and medical discourses objectify not only patients but the entire population. Prevention and cure of corona are yet at a distant future in the times. Science and state are integral in popular discourse. Medical or clinical discourse is received as if there is no dissonance. For example, medical

statistics and medical terms have become part of everyday thoughts. The *Medicalisation of the society* without medicine is the prevalent tenor. The medical protocol has become the state's stick, and statistics reinstates medical reason. Medical statistical terminologies such as 'test positivity rate', test positive-negative, quarantine, first line treatment center, quarantine center, self-quarantine, mask, antigen test, RTPCR test, lock down, triple lock down, quarantine house, room quarantine and so on suddenly became popular among very many people. They are recurring terms in everyday vocabulary. The technologies involved in Disciplinary Society and Societies of Control complement each other. As this virus spread to the remotest parts of the world 'voluntary or involuntary servitude' to the state apparatus (*dispositif*) also increases. This is one of the most certain ways to tyranny; spaces for resistance will dwindle. If one criticise the state, then that becomes an anti-national voice/act. To the state, no extra legitimation is required to act according to the way it likes. In the governance of population, if religion, medical science and politics get combined the corona effect is not only far-reaching but also makes the tyranny-machine infallible.

Forgetting oneself is a fleeting moment of relief corona days of paranoia, uncertainty, indecisiveness, insecurity, individualisation, isolation. During the time of corona, solitude is solidarity, so to say, or if you wish; live till the tyranny of breath. So far, no appropriate word exists to represent forgetting the past and present, and reveries a dreadful future. Future has to be, as a speculation, a word deletable. Nietzsche is still alive; let us dream of children's land! Such dreams about children's life in the future are like writing on still water. Unleash the desire to be utopic while not being dystopic and dystopic to oneself and to others.

Forget about forgetfulness.... The appearance of the corona effect all over is associated with the disappearance of the most cared. Increasingly, corona effects are spreading and multiplying rampantly and becoming a nightmare whenever one is awake. Corona effect spares none: it affects the ruled as well as the ruling and both the employer and the employed alike. Corona corners us, for it subsumes One's Self. Whether you are corona affected or not, 'corona effects' spares none.

The democratic state can become an authoritarian state or booking anyone by the state police or operations of judicial apparatus have become so simple in the days of corona for covid protocols can be invoked; no extra-legitimation tools are required. Any protest against the acts of an oppressive state has become feeble as medical reason stipulates that only a small number of people should assemble at a spot.

The party politics combined with the religious institution is an arrangement machine. Such combining leads to autocracy or tyranny. Likewise, the pandemic combined with the medical protocols can ease a state to become tyrannical.

### **On Distancing**

While the general and imprecise phrase "social distancing" is still widely used, it may send a wrong message and contribute to social isolation. The phrase 'physical distancing' is a more precise concept emphasising a person keeping six or eight feet away from other individuals. It is based on medical reasons. Let me recount another type of social/physical distancing that is well known. The argument is that the present think of social distancing and physical distancing as interchangeable, like politics and parties. The misnomers triumph.

The 'social distancing' had entirely different ground. Social distancing has been in existence for centuries; recall caste distancing and homohierarchicus. Most of the studies on social history, from a modern perspective, noted that most of the Social Reform movements in Kerala were against social distancing and physical distancing among individuals. Social distancing based on caste was banal. The social distancing continues in the present as well. Now social distancing returns with double effect in the time of covid with different social connotations and implications. Medical protocols and the state protocells insist on social distancing instead of physical distancing. Things can turn upside down.

The corona pandemic is drastically moulding and modulating the lives of everyone, whether one is affected by the coronavirus or not. When I use the corona effect, it affects everyone who knows about the corona-isolation and already corona affected as well as those who suspect that covid-19 may affect us as well. Schools and Universities have been closed, examinations and extracurricular events are postponed, the usual health services are minimised, and corona caring takes a significant proportion of even in the popular newspapers. During the pre-corona case, students of schools and colleges, could socialise with friends and broader family clusters. Socialisation (except through electronic devices) is severely discouraged and, in some instances, even punishable. Living in these circumstances can be disadvantageous to the young one's social, physical and mental development, and sociality cultivation in general. The sociability of these young and youth tend towards minimum. Maybe new forms of sociality may surge.

Distancing in the present is part of common sense. The idea of a society in terms of congregation, consensus or disputes have become

redundant or found the limits of conveyable meanings. The ideal of society is dispersion and distancing. Those who keep distancing are social beings. Even facial expressions are partially masked. The central question is, how the 'distancing' process prompts us to redefine 'social' and 'society'.

What do I mean by 'distancing'? Social distancing is indeed a misnomer in the present context, but distancing as a verb has opened up new vistas quite contrary to the distancing as it is in the *Smrithies* or any such texts. Distancing is no more a religious norm as in the age-old caste/religious relations. I prefer the concept of safe distancing rather than social distancing. The physical/social distinctions are prevalent, but then even in modern times, physical distancing is not a possibility. Even during corona spread, it is not possible in a country like India or Kerala where the population density is very high. In any case, society's idea of distancing is on the move or in it is in its becoming.

To be among others is cut during the corona pandemic. To be with yourself is also cut, as one cannot touch one's face or any of the sensory organs without handwashing. The most important is the touch. The act of touching has become a matter of great concern. It is through touch corona spread becomes rampant.

**Safe distancing:** Anyone with some idea of how the coronavirus spread may know how distancing is critical in positioning one's body with others. See, any anthropological or ethnographical texts in which one may encounter various kinds of social distancing based on caste and privileges. That was also a kind of social distancing that has nothing to do with the way in which we use the phrase social or physical or safe

distancing now. The concept of social and the verb distancing has been prevalent in our discourses. They have meanings altogether different; no, keeping a distance from others is more than being social because one is considerate. What is important at this juncture is not so much about social, physical or anything of that kind, but the verb distancing.

It is one thing to talk about safe distancing, it is another thing to talk about physical distancing, and it is yet another thing to talk about social distancing. The common factor to all the three is the verb, 'distancing'. The phrase 'safe distancing' has to occur in my mind now and then, as if it were, one has to keep a safe distance from someone who can be your potential and undesirable infectant. Paradoxically, the potential infectant cannot be recognised while one is in the private or public spaces. The phrase 'safe distancing' has other meanings as well. For instance, we say that, keep a safe distance from avalanche prone area while you climb some or other snow-capped peak, say, in the Himalayas or keep a safe distance from a flash flood prone river or keep a fair distance from thoughts that may disturb you or keep a distance from answering the question 'what are you' and so on. The phrase, 'keep a safe distance' from something or other can occur on innumerable occasions beyond our speculation. The phrase 'keep a safe distance' in the case of a medicalised society is something new.

The social or physical distancing as a commonly circulated phrase has a long history; it is not new but known. Yet, the context is different now and therefore, the connotations and implications of the phrases are new. The verb distancing remains as a common factor despite the meaning of the word 'safe' change from time to time, space to space and juncture to juncture.

The word 'physical' has become so arbitrary as much as social. What is social has become a taken for granted word; it is no longer a term; it is no longer a concept. The distinctions between safe, physical and social conceived so far in discourses and confabulations have become redundant. If the distinctions among them are invoked, then the state gains extra authority to decide how individuals should conduct their conduct. The verb 'distancing' lingers on without arbitrariness compared to the two phrases I have pointed out.

A proposition: If I fold together social and physical distancing and leave the folded to evaporate, then what you get is a 'safe' zone. Then, how one can decide what is 'safe', especially when the infectant cannot be identified. It is seemingly self-contradictory and arbitrary. Unpredictability and indecisiveness in any kind of identification of the potential infectant prevail. However random and indecisive the term 'safe' is, 'safe distancing appears to be safe' now.