

Universal Health Organisation (UHO)

People's Health in People's Hands



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Public Health Regressing to Primeval Times? Proposed WHO Treaty and the Public Health Bill bring more concerns

Imagine psychotic patients in present times, bound and restrained and subjected to trephining, i.e. making a hole in the skull to release evil spirits. Imagine further, that these patients are injected with new experimental drugs without their consent or the consent of their caretakers, for the benefit of humanity. After all, psychotic patients can harm others.

While these practices were routine in primeval times, such practices today will raise serious ethical issues and an outcry from the medical fraternity and the people.

However, the pandemic precipitated mass formation psychosis when far more serious violations of human rights and ethics occurred due to the responses of world governments; and without any public outcry. The Covid-19 pandemic since its beginnings drove harsh public health policies, which were not implemented even in primeval times for far more lethal diseases such as plague in a pre-antibiotic era, or smallpox in a pre-immunization era. Fatalities from these scourges exceeded 40% before the discovery of antibiotics and vaccines.

Who would have imagined that for a disease like Covid-19 where the infection fatality rates are in the range of 0.1% to 0.3% instead of 40%, draconian measures unprecedented in the history of public health would be implemented. Livelihoods have been destroyed and far more lives endangered than those saved from the infection.

Along with scientific advances in the field of virology, did we develop tunnel vision and lose our common sense? The events suggest both were indeed the case. Any remaining doubts on this were removed with the roll out of mass vaccination for all; old and young, including children and pregnant women. The inclusion of the last two groups was without scientific backing and unconscionable. What is more, is that the vaccines were not fully safety tested, nor time tested, but new and experimental with uncertain long term effects. A global environment of propaganda and high pressure promotion left little space for valid informed consent. *Vaccine hesitancy* even if genuine was frowned upon, shamed and stigmatized. Even courts were reluctant to entertain petitions raising any concerns on vaccine mandates lest they lead to "*vaccine hesitancy*". The Supreme Court of India to its credit subsequently partially redeemed the judicial process, when it ruled recently that vaccines cannot be made compulsory and vaccination status should not be grounds for discrimination in for example, jobs or education.

However, we may not be so fortunate in times to come if the contentious Pandemic Treaty proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Public Health Bill proposed by the Government of India, is implemented.

The WHO has proposed an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. All public health principles and ethics seem to have been abandoned in the proposed Pandemic Treaty. While sound public health principles are unglamorous and are not eye catching, unsound public health principles, however inappropriate, can be made glamorous and eye catching with sufficient propaganda and fanfare. This has been the case with the Covid-19 pandemic by the 'legacy media' on an unprecedented scale of both misinformation and disinformation.

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Dr David Bell a former WHO scientist has cautioned that the Pandemic Treaty can cause perpetual lockdowns and threaten the autonomy and sovereignty of nations who sign this treaty, because *“it will in effect, take away the ability of the people of that country to make their own decisions.”* Such proposals will create a bureaucracy *“whose existence is dependent on pandemics,”* ---*“They will have a very vested interest in finding outbreaks and declaring them potential pandemics, and then responding. It's the way that they (bureaucracy) will survive. And it appears that they will make lockdowns a permanent feature of pandemic response.”*

The influence of the Corporate Sector in the decisions taken by WHO have also surfaced time and again. *“If you are trying to maximise returns to your shareholders, and you are running a pharmaceutical company, than you do not concentrate on getting people physically well so that they have natural resistance to disease, you concentrate on selling the product for the disease that they have”* (Dr Bell).

For countries like India with a large burden of treatable and preventable endemic communicable diseases with far more lethality than emerging viral diseases with uncertain treatments and much lower mortality, handing over the reins of public health responses to the WHO in case of pandemics declared according to the whims and fancies of this discredited organization would be suicidal.

While the proposed Pandemic Treaty of the WHO threatens to take away the autonomy of nations, the prospective Public Health Bill 2022 as advertised in the national media which is expected to be tabled in the monsoon session of Parliament raises serious concerns about violation of individual autonomy and human rights. Furthermore, unlike the Epidemic Act, this Bill has no provision for compensation by the government to individuals who may suffer injury, or losses due to loss of livelihood etc. It is also ultra vires of the Constitution of India, and draws parallels with the Nazi era, which led to the Nuremberg Trials and subsequent Treaty after WW II.

Most concerning is that the prospective Bill may give powers to the police and the State, as is presently being witnessed in China. Fundamental rights of bodily autonomy and fundamental civil liberty will be threatened as mandatory medical procedures, forced entry into any house, private premises, forced isolation, quarantine and other such tyrannical measures have been included in the Bill in case of any pandemic, or if there is likelihood of any public health emergency. And all this has been proposed in the larger interest of humanity! The people will be at the mercy of the police and bureaucrats who will be immune to any penalty for any such arbitrary acts carried out in good faith. The provisions of this act shall have overriding effect over any provision in any other law for the time being in force.

The Bill is aligned with the proposed Pandemic Treaty by WHO. This unholy alliance has the potential to assume, "absolute power", which "corrupts absolutely."

Let us hope, neither see the light of day, are strenuously opposed with success, failing which, the largest democracy in the world will fail the people. As a measure of hope, one can take inspiration from the words of Justice Chandrachud of the Supreme Court, *“States can spread lies, but the citizens must remain vigilant and they have a duty to expose the lies.”* The following words from Einstein provide further courage for us to apply correct thinking: *“unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth.”*

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Author's opinions are personal, and do not represent those of their organizations