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History 129A

18 May 2020

REFLECTIONS ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

How has it affected you and your family?

One day in February, while watching the news on Youtube, I came to know that the corona virus that emerged in China has now begun to spread in my country, Korea. Formerly, the United States did not pay attention to the pandemic and except for a few people, the majority never considered wearing a mask. I also didn't realize the severity of the condition and continued going to the fitness center until mid-March, when the condition had already gone out of control. In mid-March, LA county imposed a complete shut down on all shops and businesses. All the educational institutions were closed and made to conduct classes and exams online completely changing the daily routine life. People from all the public and private organizations were asked to work from home online. Even, the sports and showbiz activities were canceled due to the outbreak.

Like the whole world, Corona has also influenced my life dramatically in different ways including my academic as well as indoor activities. The panic created by the Corona virus pandemic developed into a psychological and anxiety disorder for me and I could not concentrate entirely on my studies. Fortunately, the winter quarter tests ended well, but my daily life and learning routines were destroyed.

Furthermore, from the perspective of a foreigner living away from my family, I was very

scared of the situation and feared contracting the infection. I wondered with anxiety if this situation could be overcome somehow. Not only that, I am kind of a person who tends to get energy by meeting people and having a good time with my friends, but being trapped in the room for consecutive a month was painful for me. Above all, it was saddest not to enjoy the campus life that gave me the greatest pleasure. After transferring to UCLA in 2016 and attending the military, the corona virus prevented me from attending school for just two semesters. It was also a sad thing that I couldn't get to the Class of 2020 graduation ceremony.

Third and last, my family and I, apart from a mental breakdown, had a hard time financially too. The economic situation in the house was severely deteriorating, so both my family and I had to try our hardest to save money. As, I was living alone in the United States, my parents were restless and worried about my health. We were desperately waiting for this pandemic to end so we could have a happy meet-up after all.

At the end of March, my parents in Korea were updated about the worsening conditions of Corona in the United States. They asked me to come back to Korea at the earliest. Finally, all schools were officially ordered to run a remote class, and I immediately pledged to return to the summer quarter and boarded a plane to Korea.

Korea responded to Corona in a very different way than the United States. For the initial response (not personal opinion), the Korean government traced the path of infected people through epidemiological investigations and scrutinized the mechanism of its spread. (How South Korea Flattened the Curve, NYT). In response to COVID-19, immigrants from abroad were ordered to do self-quarantine for two weeks after arriving in the country. On arrival back home, I also went into self-isolation spending two weeks in a separate room. Since, I had the chance to already have an infection, I was scared to meet anyone from my

family. It was too harsh for me to have two weeks without interacting with anyone. Excuses may be excuses, but due to self-isolation for two weeks, I lost my will to study again. Also, I felt sorry for the family who was struggling with me.

However, along with drawbacks, everything brings something positive with it. There was also a good side of the corona virus which had brought positive impacts on me and my family. Firstly, in addition to bringing difficulties for us, the corona virus has paradoxically made my family happier and stronger. We got plenty of time to spend together which would not have been possible otherwise. Through hard times together, we tried to have a lot of conversations, encouraged each other, and had a joyful time. Secondly, I started working at home like others did to live a normal life, and ironically, Corona made me healthier. Thirdly, I realized that ordinary everyday life was a precious gift.

By the end of April, Korea had 0 confirmed people, and many people restored their daily life activities (BBC). I also returned to my daily life and started enjoying a happy life again even at this point of writing. I was once again amazed at the Korean government's ability to cope with the outbreak and deteriorating conditions worldwide. Due to its highly efficient policies and in time correct decisions Korea has proved itself to be a crisis-resistant country. The most painful thing however, is the exponential growth of the number of confirmed cases in the United States and its people are still having a hard time. I sincerely hope the situation in the United States will improve as early as possible.

How has it affected your community, the country, and the world?

How has it affected your community?

Not being able to work outside, people had started to suffer financially a lot. The people below the poverty line who were the most affected. In addition to the financial crisis, the health conditions started deteriorating as people started avoiding going to hospitals. Students had a tough time in studying from home which was of no gain as it was a new technique. However, the one thing that was seen all over the globe, the zeal of helping others in this time of need was practiced by all without any distinction. People become too kind to donate money, food, and essentials to their neighbors and country mates. Not only the social relations were improved but the personal activities had also changed positively among people.

As the Quarantine period lengthened, people began to search for hobbies that they could do at home. People tried to be creative in their way to overcome boredom. Trying new recipes, Youtube video making, memes creation and home training, etc are examples of the activities people started at home. People even started taking part in house chores and the attitude of finding pleasure in small things without falling into their panic felt cool. Besides, it was taken for granted to replace everyday activities with virtual content such as online classes and zoom meetings. In the future, it is expected that future virtual industries will develop. Not only that, there were fewer days of meeting and playing with friends, but as fewer people interacted with each other, the stress from social activities was reduced.

The country?

Without starting the debate of right or wrong, let me clarify that I will write my personal opinion. Though immediate correct decisions from the government have controlled the situation in April but the disasters that corona was brought would have a long going impact on the country's economy. The latest edition of the World Bank Kenya Economic update had predicted the downfall of the growth of the economy from 1.5 to 1.0 if the

pandemic is not controlled in the coming months. The gross domestic product of Kenya had started decelerating at a substantial rate during the past 2 months owing to the corona outbreak. It is uncertain that when will the curve of economic growth will flatten not only for Kenya but worldwide. It is yet to determine the possible play out of the pandemic in nationally and internationally. The hardships emerging from the pandemic had affected the poorer majorly and the government had the challenge to combat all the problems simultaneously. All the policies government was taking were focused to strengthen the health systems to save people's lives. The medical system was the most challenged because it had an extraordinary workload with no proper guidelines and dimensions to follow. Along with facilitating the health sector to the maximum, the government had to impose lockdown to all the public places including schools, travels, offices, all kinds of public gatherings as well as nightly curfews. All the necessary steps were taken to contain the spread of the virus as early as possible. One of the most difficult challenges government had to accept was to control people despite restrictions. Even corona positive cases tried to run out from the quarantine centers risking other people's lives and the government had to take strict actions against them. People were caught fleeing from the quarantine centers and the government had to arrest and charge fine on them. As a result of the sincere efforts from the government and our medical community, corona cases started decreasing in April, and thankfully by the end of April we had zero positive cases in Kenya.

As the reliability of a country called Korea rises, two effects can be expected. Foreign investment capital will be concentrated. Moreover, as tourists perceive Korea as a safe country, the country's economy is expected to revive after the corona is over. Also, Korea has been able to promote its advanced medical system to the world. My father's close friend is a doctor, and he said that it was not only at the national level that Korea was able to

overcome Corona but also across the borders. He said Korean doctors not only treated more patients than other foreign doctors, but also helped to overcome the difficult situation quickly thanks to the world's largest number of doctors per population. I'm also going to talk about the economy of the country. I think revitalizing the economy through national disaster subsidies such as Korea and the United States has some effect. Since the impact of the country on the economy is so important, I think we should always be careful to make the right decisions.

And the world?

Initially China had locked down Wuhan and contained the spread of the virus. However, the virus managed to spread out to other countries through people traveling on international flights. The number of corona cases increased dramatically within days and despite several measures taken by governments of most countries it took the whole world into its grip. Like Kenya, Corona has drastic effects globally leaving the world wondering the future of earth. Millions of people worldwide are affected by the Covid-19 with more than 1 lakh deaths within two months of the spread. Not only the health of the people is compromised, but the economy has also seen a downfall that it has never witnessed in many decades. Import and export of goods, international flights, business deals, and student placements are canceled worldwide. People working and studying outside of their countries are sent back home with no predictions of when would they be able to resume their work.

However, the earth has also witnessed marvels of corona which have healed its wounds. The natural beauty of earth has restored and there is a significant decline in air pollution and hence global warming. The relations among different countries have also improved at these tough times. I stumbled across a comment that Corona appeared to cure the

Earth. From the Earth's standpoint, it was commented that humans are viruses and corona is a vaccine for treating viruses. It was really fun to see from a different perspective. Since history is human-centered, it was interesting to look at viruses from a natural point of view.

Historically, humanity has always faced a crisis over some time. The crisis was not only an economic crisis, but also a disease crisis. After all, mankind has always overcome what threatens us, and has given us a better direction. We are still living in a crisis. No one knows what will happen in the future, but humanity will make a vaccine, and Corona firmly believes it will disappear in history

Resources

Fisher, Max, and Choe Sang-hun. "How South Korea Flattened the Curve." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 23 Mar. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/world/asia/coronavirus-south-korea-flatten-curve.html.

BBC World News - South Korea zero new cases
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB-K15ch0SI>