

## Impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on social life of coal employees

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Coal is the major source of energy in India. State owned Coal India Limited is responsible for around 83% of supply of coal in India. Coal Industry is a great source of employment in India. Central Government owned Coal India Limited (CIL) having about 2.72 lakhs of permanent employees and also contractual work force in huge number. The first case of CORONA reported in country on 30th Jan 2020. Sometime during middle of march, CORONA appears to be a massive threat if not managed aggressively. Nationwide lockdown was imposed on 24th March 2020. People in whole nation are locked in their houses. Industries are closed except essential services. Coal Industry is in essential services. The continuous functioning of coal industry is must required for the Nation in this crisis situation. Coal India Limited is supplying Coal to the Nation as well as also support Government and its agencies in their endeavours towards fighting CORONA. The permanent and contractual workforce of CIL still 24\*7 on work throughout the lock down as usually to ensure the energy security of nation along with other frontline corona warriors following complete Covid-19 protocols and guidelines. The regular as well as contractual work force of CIL contributing ceaselessly towards energy security of nation challenging the danger of Covid-19 virus. The societal life of coal employees and their families is almost changed. Coal India Limited acknowledges the selfless effort of its employees and declare payment of ex-gratia of Rs. 15 Lakhs to next kin of employees of CIL and its subsidiaries including contractor workers dying due to Covid -19 w.e.f. 24 march 2020. Coal India Limited also ensure best possible Covid-19 treatment and care for its employees and their dependants as already provided medical facilities in case of other illnesses by empanelling best hospitals in country along with its own healthcare system. It also provide full special leave for quarantine and other medical condition required due to Covid-19 for its employees. These activities develop a sense of special belongingness in

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employees of Coal India Limited and bring out their best performance in any kind of adverse situation. Coal employees as Corona Coal Warriors are continuously fighting Covid-19 along with other frontline Corona warriors facing all adversities of Covid-19. The services of Corona Coal Warriors during the pandemic, must be recognized and appreciated as other frontline corona warriors.

**Keywords:** Coal, Corona, Covid-19, Corona warriors, Energy, Frontline workers.

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## **Introduction**

Coal Industry is responsible for about 57% of primary commercial energy requirement of country. Coal India Limited produces around 83% coal produced in India. India having 5th largest coal reserve in world. But it import about 215 MTe of coal annually. Coal is mainly required by Power sector in country. Other sectors require coal are Iron and Steel, Fertilizer, Cement, etc. Proper functioning of Coal Industry is a must requirement for energy security of country. Coal Industry is a great source of employment in India. Central Government owned Coal India Limited (CIL) having about 2.72 lakhs of permanent employees. CIL also having contractual work force in huge number. Coal Industry is spread in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhatisgargh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Maharastra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, UP, Meghalya, Assam, Nagaland, Sikkim, Arunanchal Pradesh. The first case of CORONA reported in country on 30th Jan 2020. But till the start of March 2020, it not seems to be a great challenge. In middle of March, the spread of corona impact its seriousness and it appeared to be a threat in future if not managed aggressively. Nationwide lockdown was imposed since 24th March 2020. Almost whole nation is locked in their houses. Almost industries are closed except essential services. Many sectors of economy suffered adversely. Many People returned back to their villages or native places after closing of their industry due to lock down. There is great sense of Panic in atmosphere. Coal Industry is in essential services. The continuous functioning of coal industry is must required for the Nation in this crisis situation. The functioning of coal industry is not required only for supplying Coal to the Nation but also for supporting Government and its agencies in fighting CORONA. Coal India Limited supports Central as well as State Governments and their agencies with its resources as required to tackle Pandemic situation. The permanent and contractual workforce of CIL still 24\*7 on work throughout the lock down. Coal workers attend their duties with full devotion and enthusiasm even in far flung remote areas. They are on time to attend their duties even by travelling 40-50 km or more through the means of facilities provided by the company following full COVID 19 protocols and advisory issued by Central and State governments. It is ensured by all employees from General Mazdoor to top

management to strictly follow all the COVID 19 protocols during their working. Since the first day, awareness about various guidelines and their strict compliance assured. It may either be social distancing, proper sanitization, use of sanitizer, masks and protective measure, thermal screening, etc.

At the start of lock down, there is panic situation throughout the country, but Coal employees are on their routine to serve their responsibility for nation. They are aware of the situation and atmosphere throughout the country but they are more aware about the responsibility of energy security of nation on their shoulders. All the preventive measures are strongly followed in coal belt for coal employees. Employees or their family members came from out of station or other cities in recent 15 days were kept in Quarantine either at home or at quarantine centres. In spite of all carefulness, Corona spread in coal belts. Cases increase day by day. Mild to severe illness reported in employees and their families. Deaths of employees or their family members are reported. Contact tracing was done and containment zones were made. Susceptible people are isolated. Situation is going to be more challenging day by day. But in spite of all adversities and challenges, one thing is continuous and appreciable is the commitment and devotion of coal employees towards their responsibility for energy security of nation. Coal employees are on work in all the shifts 24\*7 in all areas daily irrespective of challenges and adversities they are facing as **Corona Coal Warriors**. Coal Industry in all areas run throughout this crisis ceaselessly.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the impact of Covid-19 and lock down on social life of coal employees.
2. To explore about the working of coal employees during nationwide lock down due to Covid-19.

This study is based on the empirical study done through the observation and experience sharing of Coal employees during Covid-19 period. Some relevant literatures are also reviewed to carve the background of the study.

### **Review of Literature**

Covid-19 impact negatively on economy and human life (Aritra Ghosh, Srijita Nundy, Tapas K. Mallick ). During lock down, maximum activities are halted. Therefore air quality improves. Positive impact is observed for environment. A new concept of work from home evolved to Covid-19 crisis. People are forced to stay home and work from home (*Ashok Kumar Verma and Sadguru Prakash, 2020*). This

abnormal scenario provides the opportunity to spent time with family for the employees of industries, which are working with this new concept. School and colleges are closed. Children are forced to stay at home. A new concept of online classes developed due to Covid-19 pandemic. It enhance the work life balance as employees are living more with family than earlier. But in Coal industry this concept is not applicable. The coal employees have to present on site in mines and also at their offices respectively. The working requirement of this industry does not permit to follow work from home concept. Coal employees are also deprived from this opportunity of the crisis, at the same time facing the risk of infection for the sake of energy security of Nation. Trade restriction due to Covid-19 influence the global coal trade (*Paola Yanguas Parra, Christian Hauenstein, Pao-Yu Oei, 2021*). Negative trends in global coal market accelerated by Covid-19. Coal is responsible for one third of primary energy requirement of world. Alternate sources of energy are in nascent stage specially in developing world. Coal is still the backbone of energy security and development in developing world. In India mining sector is key for recovery post Covid-19 (*Pradeep Kumar Jain, 2021*).The major cause of the anxiety or stress in employees are fear to contaminate the Covid 19 virus to their family members (*Dilaver Tengilimoglu, Aysu Zekioglu, Nurperihan Tosum, Oguz Isik, Onur Tengilimoglu, 2021*). This fear also produce psychological impact on employees on continuous working during this pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has severely influenced lives and livelihoods (*Sven Tuzovic & Sertan Kabadayi, 2020*). Many people lost their earnings. Many people lost their employment temporarily or permanently. The daily earners are most suffered in population for livelihood. Governments, different Government undertakings, different charitable and other organizations, even common people put their hard efforts to reduce and remove sufferings and ensure food for everyone. Coal India Limited and coal employees also put their all the efforts to serve humanity in all possible ways in this crisis situation. Social distancing, lockdowns, isolation periods, and anxiety of getting sick, along with the suspension of productive activity, loss of income, and fear of the future influence the mental health of citizens and workers (*Gabriele Giorgi, Luigi Isaia Lecca , Federico Alessio , Georgia Libera Finstad, Giorgia Bondanini, Lucrezia Ginevra Lulli, Giulio Arcangeli, and Nicola Mucci, 2020*). Psychological issues are also significantly associated with this pandemic specially in case of frontline workers. The organizations implementing lean services more extensively are more likely benefited in Covid-19 work environment especially in the case of home office (*Guilherme Tortorella, Gopalakrishnan Narayanamurthy, Moacir Godinho Filho, Alberto Portioli Staudacher, Alejandro Francisco Mac Cawley, 2020*). A compassionate managerial leadership can drive a considerate response to employees fear of job insecurity, healthcare

risk and concerns about work overload, underpayment and delayed payment, which some of the key causes of increased stress among employees during the COVID-19 pandemic (*Emeka Smart Oruh, Chima Mordi, Chianu Harmony Dibia, Hakeem Adeniyi Ajonbadi, 2021*). Frontline professionals are exposed to unprecedented levels of intensive existential threat requiring systematic, specialized psychological intervention and support (*Agustina Zaka, Soraya E Shamloo, Pasquale Fiorente and Alessandro Tafuri, 2020*). Coal mining will play an important role in India for next many years but transition planning required early implementation and Public Sector Undertakings should be used to create job opportunities in coal-dependent states (*Prof. Johannes Urpelainen and Setu Pelz, 2020*). Coal Industry with state owned Coal India Limited is one of major employment source in India.

### **Impact of Covid 19 on social life of coal employees**

Coal belt is generally situated in remote areas. These belts are developed due to the existence of coal mining industry. These areas are generally taken the shape of small towns with the population of mine workers and inhabitants of nearby villages and localities. These areas are having well developed infrastructures with self sustained economy. These areas are having small population in general. These areas having compact market places, which are only places for people to purchase their daily needs. These places having self sustained economy though these are situated in far places from main towns.

Majority of population in coal belts are coal employees. They are having good earnings. They contribute much to the prosperity of these areas. These areas having mixed population of local and outsider inhabitants. Coal companies provides employment to land oustees as well as recruits employees. So, they are having employees of different region, religion, caste and customs. People in these areas having different societal groups and gatherings, formal and informal associations and celebrations. Corona impacts adversely to life style of coal employees. With the arrival of corona and imposition of lock down, all the formal and informal social gatherings are stopped. Families of coal employees are almost locked in their houses. All type of societal activities are ceased. Markets are closed. Gathering are ceased. School and colleges are closed. All things are closed except the coal mines and offices.

Corona protocols were imposed strictly in these areas. The societal atmosphere in these areas are abruptly changed. Amid all the adversities coal employees were on work. They are on their duties as usual but within strict protocols to be followed. They followed all guidelines of administration with full spirit and mean while contributing towards the energy security of nation. Situation is tough, scenario is

tough but the objective of coal employees is same as in normal situation. They don't having any liberty or relaxation. They are grasped with the unseen fear of virus. Coal employees left for the work place as usual though the atmosphere is full of panic and fear. They know the risk they are taking for the nation's energy security. They are well known that they may got infected and carry the infection to their home in the situation. Markets are closed. Essential things are available only in stipulated times. Professional and personal lives are very difficult to run simultaneously. But coal employees handle this difficult scenario. They understand their responsibilities towards country as well as the family. They follow all precautions strictly at work place. After returning from work, they follow strict precaution to keep themselves and their family safe from virus. They are keeping themselves separate from family members as much as possible to stop any possible spread. Mask and sanitizer becomes the part and parcel of life.

With the increase in spread of COVID-19, the situation became tougher day by day. The news of death of coal workers due to COVID-19 spread in coal belts. The atmosphere of grieves and sorrow spread throughout these areas. Corona engulf not only coal workers but their family members also. Death toll increases day by day. People faced deep concern and fear. But still, coal employees are on work with full commitment to ensure their responsibility towards nation.

### **Coal production and offtake of Coal India Limited during financial year 2020-2021**

The provisional annual coal production and offtake for financial year 2020-2021 and previous financial year and growth is shown in table below-

S. No.	FY 2020-2021	Last FY	% Growth
COAL PRODUCTION (Figs in Mill Te)	596.2	602.1	-1.0
OFFTAKE (Figs in Mill Te)	573.8	581.4	-1.3

(Source- [www.coalindia.in/media/documents/Production.pdf](http://www.coalindia.in/media/documents/Production.pdf) 01Apr 2021)

The above table shows growth in coal production by -1.0 percent and a growth of -1.3 percent in offtake during FY 2020-21 as compared to FY 2019-20. There is a slight negative growth in coal production and offtake as compared to previous year but it is not significant when seen in the purview of Covid-19 global crisis. The global economy is almost severely affected by the disaster of Covid-19. Almost every sector is facing crisis situation in one or another way. There is a battle of survival going on for humanity. Coal Industry is a labour intensive industry and involving active onsite participation of people in its various activities. This production and offtake figure is achieved by the team work and commitment of Coal employees governed by proper directives for nations energy security.

At the start of this Covid-19 crisis, things seemed to be difficult for future but as the time passed, CIL adopted itself to this challenging situation and fully operational in this neo normal. It clearly reflects in the provisional production figure of FY 2020-2021.

### **Loss of Corona Coal warriors**

Covid-19 adversely affected Mankind in all aspects of its life. Humanity suffered a huge loss in the form of human lives due to Covid-19. More than 4 lakhs deaths recorded in India due to Covid-19. Coal employees are on 24\*7 working throughout all these wave and peaks of Covid-19. All the Covid-19 protocols are being ensured and followed since the inception of Covid-19. But Corona spread among coal employees and their family members. Coal India and its subsidiaries ensured proper and best treatment for its employees and their dependents through its health care schemes and facilities. But many Coal employees and their family members also lost lives due to Covid-19. There are nearly 400 Covid deaths of Coal India employees (Source- *bloomberg.com June 8,2021*). Coal India ensures all support and help to the dependants of diseased employees on top most priorities. During all these adversities and traumatic situation, Corona Coal warriors are fully self motivated and on their work to ensure energy security in this crisis situation. The supreme sacrifices of Coal employees due to Covid-19 will be written in golden words and remembered with full respect in future.

### **CIL recognitions to Corona coal warriors**

Corona warriors like health workers, police personnel and government administrative personnel are well recognized and appreciated by Government and people of country for their hard efforts in fighting with Covid-19 as their work is directly visible in society. But the hard efforts put down by Corona Coal warriors are not directly visible to society. Thus their role is not recognized by society in general. They

are not appear to be frontline worker but actually they are also frontline workers. The regular as well as contractual work force engaged in coal industry is continuously 24\*7 on work challenging the Covid-19 virus. The firm determination of coal employees for energy security of nation in the grave situation of emergency and national disaster need to be well recognized at par with other frontline workers. The employees of Coal India Limited donated their one day salary to Central Government fund for fighting with Covid-19 pandemic. Coal India limited also donated separately as an organization to Central and state governments through direct donations as well as through its different schemes and responsibilities. The different areas of CIL also provide its infrastructure to state administration for Covid management and Covid care. Along with this CIL administration in different areas also support state administration as and when required with true spirit to combat Corona. It is either in formation of Quarantine centres or Covid care centres and their management or sanitization works or of management and feeding of migrant workers during imposition of lock down. The immense contribution of coal employees through various activities of CIL along with their parent role of assuring energy security of nation by producing continuous coal, need to be well recognized and appreciated by the society and nation.

The board of directors of Coal India Limited in their 408th meeting held on 04-08-2020, accorded the approval of payment of Ex-gratia of Rs.15 Lakhs to the next kin of employees of CIL and its subsidiaries including contractor workers dying due to Covid -19 w.e.f. 24 march 2020. This is a key step in assuring employees engaged in CIL that the organization and Government recognizes their selfless devotion and commitment and always stand with them and their families. These type of activities and appreciations act as moral boosting for Corona Coal warriors. Coal India Limited provide best health care facilities to its employees and their dependants free of cost through empanelling with best hospitals in country along with its own well developed health care system. Coal India extends all such facilities and services in case Covid-19 also. It also provide full special leave for quarantine and medical condition required due to Covid-19 for its employees. These activities develop a sense of special belongingness in employees of Coal India Limited and bring out their best performance in any kind of adverse situation.

### **Conclusion:**

Corona pandemic is really a great challenge to human civilization. It definitely halts the development of humanity and pull it backward. The determination and willpower of human beings continuously and collaboratively fighting with this pandemic Covid-19 virus. People are contributing in this fight by



different means. The prime motive is to save human lives and eliminate this pandemic to get the life towards normalcy. The health workers, police and public administration, various government and other agencies contributing in different possible ways. Energy is key resource in running all these activities and fighting and conquering Corona. Coal is the primary source of nation's energy requirement. Therefore the coal employees, the Corona Coal Warriors are the key fighters in this war against corona virus. After out-break of Corona and imposition of nation-wide lock down, the whole scenario changes unexpectedly. Whole nation is locked in their respective houses. Industries are closed. But coal industry is running and coal employees are on work 24\*7 as usually to ensure the energy security of nation along with other frontline corona warriors. The regular as well as contractual work force of CIL contributing ceaselessly towards energy security of nation challenging the danger of Covid-19 virus. Along with their prime responsibility, coal employees also contributing directly and indirectly in fight against Corona with central and state authorities with various means as and when required. The societal life of coal employees and their families changes drastically. These Coal employees emerge as Corona Coal Warriors in the fight of human civilization toward this pandemic caused by Covid-19 virus. The devotion, commitment and immense contribution of Corona Coal warriors in the fight against Covid-19 must be recognized and appreciated by the nation and society.

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