

## **BITTER PILL DIPLOMACY**

**During the WWII, Malaria was the dreaded disease** and large no of British/ Indian troops use to fall sick due to malaria. **There were more sickness cases then battle casualties.** That time, it was decided to **administer the Quinine (Now called HCQ) tablets as compulsory drill** during evening roll calls of Army. It use to be very bitter and hence called the **BITTER PILL**. The tradition continued even after the great war was over. While, I was undergoing training at Indian Military Academy, Dehradoon in 1978-79, sometimes during malaria season, the quinine was given as preventive medicare. For those, who made faces or when seniors were not happy with our discipline, even water was not provided. **Little did we know that one day this bitter pill will charter the diplomatic course of international relations.**

The CORONA pandemic has dramatically altered international diplomacy in last three months. **The nation states are no longer shopping for multi role fighter jets, ballistic missiles, rockets, guns and submarines.** The tables have been turned by Corona. Now, the **super powers** are requesting developing countries like **India to provide them inconspicuous medicines like Hydroxychloroquine(HCQ) and Paracetamol.**

**HCQ, commonly called quinine or bitter pill, in India and it's poor cousin paracetamol were like two pretty teenage girls, unnoticed in suburban India, who suddenly got crowned as Miss Universe and Miss World 2020, in a ceremony sponsored by COVID 19.** They suddenly shot up to fame and now all countries want to invite them into their countries. HCQ, the drug at the centre of this diplomacy, is a derivative of chloroquine, a traditional malaria treatment compound. Paracetamol is a pain reliever and brings down fever. These are used in preventive and symptomatic management of COVID-19.

**India produces 70% of the world's supply of HCQ. That's why not just US President Trump, but Heads of 30 other countries are requesting India for the drug to fight COVID19.** India can produce 40 tons of HCQ in 30 days, meaning 20,00,00,000 tablets of 200 mg each. That's enough for years, for every COVID19 affected country, in the world. **India can treat entire Universe with its supply.**

**The COVID 19 infections have reached almost 02 million mark, world over, with the death toll crossing over 1,10,000. India's "medical diplomacy" by first lifting the Export Ban on HCQ, will certainly enhance it's image as "a responsible Nation State of the world" while China is being portrayed as villain due to it's alleged lack of transparency. Public expressions of thanks from the Presidents of USA and Brazil for quick shipments of drugs are a sign of growing stature of India, as a 'friend in need'. Today, India is sending these ship loads of medicines to 30 nations in the world.**

**Bitter Pill Diplomacy of India in emerging International Scenarios, post Corona, indicate advantage to India.** Once the pandemic is brought under control, India must actively engage in rebuilding the new world. The advantages to India envisaged are flagged as under:-

- **India emerges as more stable and mature nation with strong leadership, political will, determination and willing obedience of 1.30 billion people to unite against Corona.**
- **The world is social distancing itself from China.** Japan has already shown the way by pulling out it's manufacturing units from China. USA will soon follow. **India provides a viable alternative with cheap labour, land, transportation and allied facilities.**
- **The huge consumer base of 1.30 billion people provides immense marketing potential.** The world will consider to shift manufacturing and outsourcing services to a democratic, mature and competitive nation like India.
- **India earned immense goodwill and friends in international forum by timely providing HCQ and other medicines to countries in need.** India is thus considered as a real 'friend in need'.
- **Indo-US alliance can flourish in post corona era as both share liberal and democratic values and ethos.** The platforms for collaboration are infinite and encompass economy, politics, institutions, culture and many more.
- **Indo-US closer ties, after HCQ export** will also manifest itself in the form of **vaccine sharing on priority**, for corona, which is most likely to come from the USA.

- World is already transitioning to newer, more efficient, remote modes of doing business maintaining social distancing, post Corona. **India has a competitive advantage in IT Services, Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology and Medical tourism sectors, which can be optimized.**

If all the above ingredients are added in right proportions, as per a well prepared recipe, which our present leadership is quite apt, **we can serve the world a dish, better than chowmein and surely, they will lap it up.**

India has successfully controlled the transmission of COVID-19 till date. **India will certainly tide over this threat and thereafter, use this opportunity to play a pivotal role in new world order.** Every threat should be converted into an opportunity and our PM Narendra Modi masters this art, very well.

*From the desk of –*

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