



Twitter and Whatapp help build human infrastructures of Social Support

New Delhi, 03rd July 2021, Dr. Venkata Ratnadeep Suri (Faculty, IIIT-Delhi) recently participated in a program broadcast on BBC Radio 4, conducted as part of the series 'The Digital Human'. The program hosted by Aleks Krotoski talks about ordinary people who've stepped up to save lives during India's second wave of COVID-19.

During his appearance on the podcast, Dr. Ratan discussed how technology enabled people to form local 'microcosmic systems' to allow those most in need to get the oxygen supply or other vital resources at the time of the Covid-19 crisis. The most beautiful part of this process is that it shows how ordinary members of the society, despite being total strangers, came together to help each other. This is emblematic of humanity.

At the peak of the second wave, India recorded over 26 million Covid-19 cases, second only to the US. The healthcare infrastructure, which was already under a lot of stress since the pandemic began unleashing rampage throughout the country, was overwhelmed by the sheer number of patients and demand for healthcare systems, critical drugs, and oxygen supply.

However, during this time of commotion and chaos, many good people leveraged social media platforms to lend a helping hand to those who were in need. From sharing leads about hospital beds, ventilators, oxygen cylinders to financially supporting the people who did not have the means to get themselves treated, good citizens from all over the country contributed to the battle against Covid-19 in one way or another.

Talking about how ad hoc system was set up for sharing information, Dr. Venkata Ratnadeep Suri, Faculty, IIIT-Delhi, said, "While all social media platforms have been used extensively to share information regarding Covid-19, I believe that WhatsApp and Twitter deserve extra credits for helping people during the pandemic. While Twitter served as a national and international platform where people from all regions could share vital information, WhatsApp was leveraged to create local communities, which then interlinked and shared information among themselves."

"Think of it like this: Let's say I am a member of two different groups. Now if one group posts a query regarding beds and I have already received information regarding beds in that area on another group, then by virtue of being a member of both these groups, I can serve as a bridge through which the information can move from one place to another. As I join more groups, I will be able to connect more communities and help more people. In this way, these micro-communities linked together by people played a huge role in saving lives during the second wave of the pandemic. In times of crisis, when there is no centralized system for disseminating information, the system evolves itself organically – which is what happened in India," he further added.

For more details, please visit: <https://www.iiitd.ac.in/>

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