



Going through Covid-19: A Real Struggle for Existence

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“Much I have roamed in the maze of life only to groped at uncertain, much bewildered, nowhere to hold on, but always under impression of burning desire to transcend this malady. At last, a dim ray of hope as usual, I held on tightly and what a surprise, I swam out through that whirlpool, a triumphant, a victor.”

A Real Struggle for Existence:

Entering into this new world of CORONA was a lifetime experience. I was very curious about the actual calamities of a person suffering from this infectious illness. I got picked up by the icy finger of the diabolic sting and got admitted into this new course. Being a very studious type, I completed the course very sincerely.

The struggle of course was delved more to physical side. It was a total surrender of brain. The virus was very erratic and shrewd. It knows the nerve of every person, decides its destination and the duration of the venue. If it is dissatisfied with the hotel, it changes place and visits another 3 star and 5 star hotels. There it enjoys luxurious life, shares multispecialty hospitals accompanying the victim. At the same time tortures the patient from inside and chuckles, sometimes kicked off the victim only to be devoured by municipality.

I got the gut feeling that it is the disease of high society, those who can donate to the multi-speciality beggars (Hospitals). Those who can't donate, the prickly ball leave them cunningly. The virus might like to swing on the giant wheel. So it chooses the airy wheels of lungs and make zig- zag rides, pricks inside the cage with diabolic stings. The victim gropes for his own air, as it is stolen by the virus. He outsources air from another medium. The virus feels proud to be an owner of a lavish life. It has fettered nose, mouth, pancreas and thyroid glands. All of them become weak dragging on their hind limbs.

Feeling of Untouchability:



I had a long cherished desire to study Dr. Ambedkar Thought. There is a crucial concept of Untouchability in it. It depicts the origin of untouchability and untouchables. How they became untouchables? Their plights to struggle for existence, to end age old exploitation, marginalisation, deprivation, etc. Dr. Ambedkar had studied the histories of the world and untouchability prevailed in the world. He struggled to uplift the status of untouchables, scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other backward class people through various satyagrahs and drafting Indian Constitution.

The untouchables were not allowed to come into contact with the high class people, could not cross their paths, their shadows should not touch the touchables. They had to live the life of ostracized people outside the village. Food and money used to be flung at them. If touched by mistake, they were scolded and punished.

While marching on the covid train, I experienced the same feeling. I was kept confined in a room, isolated, not to cross the threshold, food and requirements are provided at the distance by opening doors of jail again to shut down. Even I was asked to keep out of the vision of others. The threat of covid is so severe that the relatives could not bear to see by face. All are under the trauma that they might get infected to endure the life of disaster and disorder. The big difference is that in untouchability there was a feeling of disgust, but in covid there is a powerful feeling of fear. So, in this phase I actually experienced some of the plights of untouchables.

Old Reminiscences of My Mother:

While actually witnessing the hospitalised life in a multi-speciality covid ward, I realized the true trauma and plight of a patient. Leading a patient's life is not an easy task, not everybody's cup of tea. If you want to board a compartment of a hospital ward, you become their puppet and full devotion is expected. You don't have your own will or discretion. They will cut you, prick you, pierce you at several places for several times, leaving a colourful patches on your skin.....red, blue, and green, purple. Luckily today is holi, happy Holi !!!!!

When I had been cut and pricked, it reminded me of my mother's last journey, when she was in ICU groping for her last breath. She had been operated, had angioplasty, she had been asked to do respiratory exercise, had hospital food, and endured all physical torture that I also



witnessed. At the age of fifty now my skin resembles her wrinkled, gaunt, aged, patchy, thin, nerved with colourful marks of I V. I also busied myself in respirometer exercise which she used to do.

Self –Realization:

Getting into the life of a corona patient, one feels the phase of inward self-realization. The internal organs scream at their peak voice and wave for help to the external sensory organs. Lungs scream, heart scold, stomach calls for help, bones ache and bend, they all give up and finally sit down. Fever dances like ghostly creature and refuses to listen to anybody. It becomes a king of a citadel called body and dances upon the earth of skeleton, flesh and blood. It gets threatens by the paracetamol pill but sometimes refuses to listen to it. It keeps threatening the gate guard, the Thermometer.

When any organ of a body over exerts, then it's time to take a break and go on medical leave. Every organ is important, needs attention, and wants patting on its back, needs comforting hand on its burning head. Human body, which works on two fronts, physical and mental, needs rest, mind and heart also get exhausted, need a break from work.

Infection through a Sight of a Person-----is it?:

The threat of covid infection is so sturdy that the people avoid seeing the corona patient through bear eyes. They avoid the sight of a patient, lest they should get infected and endure all the problems. But I don't think the sight has to do anything with the infection. Social distancing is important to avoid any infection along with washing hand frequently, face shielding, sanitizing and avoiding gatherings.

Everyone has to do every Work:

Like in the Indian Context, still there are fixed roles assigned to the person, male or female. Nature is all omnipotent, it doesn't differentiate between the two, whether it is a man or a woman, everyone has to perform all jobs. This we have learnt from metropolitan cities. The people there are all working, they do all their work without waiting for the maids, wife, mother or helper. This covid phase has made us realize that it is not a fixed job of a woman to do all household chores. When a woman is sick or retired, their male counterparts perform all her jobs.



So all the human beings, whether male or female, should be taught to do all indoor and outdoor chores. Then only there is a chance of survival.

All Covid Warriors are Devdoots:

When I was hospitalized, I witnessed a very unique picture and was really amazed. All the covid workers, whether doctors, nurses, sisters, attendants, ward boys, guard boys, cleaners, helpers (maushi), all work on frontline. They all look same behind their PPE kit. No discrimination is there. They all work sincerely as were given an oath. They work according to their shifts. I really pity them, throughout the shift, they are in their PPE kit bearing all heat and testing various patients, work till 3 am in the morning, sometimes the whole night, following orders and rebukes of their seniors, negating all seasons, and festivities. They are always on their toes to help and save the patient.

All are equal and important. A doctor can't work without nurse, a nurse can't work without an attendant, an attendant can't work without ward boys and guards. All jobs are very crucial. After 2-3 days they all become familiar with the patients. But after their shift changes, the patient discharged. They remain in their PPE kit till their shift ends, bearing all heat, sleep in the same on the ground. I am really full of praise for them. Hats off to their dedication and work!!!!!!

Feeling of Railway Compartment:

While living in isolation, I got the feeling of the railway compartment. You are confine to one room, can use one toilet, can't roam out of the room, can walk in the limited area. Likewise in the railway compartment, you can only lie down and sit in the compartment, only can look out, and can't roam out of the compartment, can use the attach toilet, again come back to the same block. You get the ready meals at lunch and dinner, some thali and packed food at your place.

While in isolation I got the same treatment. I used to get packed food or thali, used only attached toilet, can't roam outside the block. After the end of the isolation, you come out of the isolation and get down the train leaving the compartment.

Life in Hospital, bonds and Patients:



A time came when there was urgency and I had to be hospitalized. There I witnessed a very different kind of life. I was shifted to general Covid ward along with gents and ladies. In the beginning I felt awkward but gradually the feeling of gender vanished. In the hospital, you are only a patient, need to follow the instructions of doctors and team. With the passage of time according to your personality you make acquaintances. After all you are a social animal. There were patients of all age and of varied cultures and personalities. But there everyone is just a patient. Some are very social; they start conversation and make relations. I being a very introvert hesitated to talk with people. Later I realized that being a teacher I am a very social and logical person. At one stage I fought for the needs and rights of other patients.

To my right was a serious and aged person on ventilator. His body revealed internal struggle. At last the machine inside him stopped, relieved him of his plight. Before his demise, doctors and sisters tapped him from all sides. But he refused to open his doors. The case handed over to NMC. People of NMC came late to collect the body. I lived with the body of the departed with the one whole day. I got the realization; nothing is permanent in this world, no bonds to hold on the strings of life. You never know when a live person becomes a body. If infected by corona, no one to claim the body. No place for boasting, proud, greed, fame and belongingness. In this way the dead one chalks out the life of a living being. It decides the true dictum of life.

Connected to ‘A Season of Illness’ from Kamala Das’s ‘My Story’:

While pursuing PH.D, I studied Kamala Das’s autobiography, short stories and poems. I was much amazed by her wild Imagination. In Kamala Das’s autobiography, ‘My Story’, she has revealed her deteriorating health during pregnancy and at old age. In the chapter, ‘A Season of Illness’ she has mentioned about her health. After two deliveries, she developed a serious health issues. She was suffering from leukaemia.

Kamala Das explained that,

“The right side of my abdomen ached dully and constantly, I coughed throughout the night. I could not retain even the blandest food. The nausea drove me to the bed I lay looking older than my years. I could not heave myself out of bed”. P-134



"I had lost during that illness the resemblance to anything human. I looked like a moulting bird. My skin has turned dark and scaly. My voice had thinned to a whisper".

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When I was infected by corona, I felt the same thing. I became very weak. The severe infection nearly shook me. I could not sleep properly due to constant cough, fever and weakness. I was all alone in the room to take care of myself. I used to get up many times at night to drink water and lower my temperature. At hospital also I had the feeling that I won't recover now. It has changed my voice, I could not eat properly, became so weak to walk in baby steps. My skin resembled alike my mother's skin, thin, old, aged, gaunt and scaly. But like a phoenix bird I rise from my own ashes. Like Kamala Das, again got intoxicated with life and life circles.

Self Realization is the best Accomplishment:

Though I am out of the claws of corona, but still struggling to come out of the ordeal. I feel like I have still not crossed its threshold. Still repercussions are there. I realized that everyone needs a break in a life. Excess of anything is like poison. One should avoid it. Everything is already planned and sorted out by the nature. If we go against it, we get hurt. Every life is important on earth. All matters settle in this life only. We don't need another life to fill the backlog.

Being a corona patient was the actual struggle for existence for me. At one point of time I gave up and thought that I won't be able to pass this exam. The virus dwells in your vitals, the lungs, which keep you alive. If you are out of it, you are survivor. I came out of it as a victor only with the due care, support of my family. They took good care of me, motivated me counseled me.

Finally it's a mind game. We need to make our mind strong to cross this hurdle. Once you are enlightened with this realization, this is your best accomplishment.

References:

Das. Kamala. *My Story* (Autobiography) (D C Books, Kottayam, Kerala, May, 1988).