
CORONA VIRUS – A CATASTROPHE OR A LEVELER?

Sarabjit Kaur

*Guru Nanak Khalsa College for Women, Gujarkhan Campus,
Model Town, Ludhiana, Punjab, India*

Covid 19, the deadliest virus that the humankind has ever witnessed emanated from China's Wuhan city in the fateful December of 2019. It was declared a pandemic with such a wide reach and appeared to assail its victims with an explosive magnitude that the world could not brace itself enough for the impact. From denials to the humble acceptance of the coronavirus by the governments, it soon horrified the entire world with the havoc it was capable of wreaking and long before the countries could grasp the nature of this deadly infection, they had to form strategies to tackle the lethal outbreak. Lockdowns were imposed from country to country with a view to contain its growth and to flatten the curve. Consequently, economies came to a grinding halt, low-level income groups and those living below the poverty line were the worst-hit. Shortage of the common household supplies and hoarding of the essential items further compounded the misery of the people who were trying to make sense both virus with whatever information was available about it and of the turbulent times they were living in. All were stuck and hence had to embrace what Covid had instore for them. Within a few weeks,

Covid had the entire world in its firm grip and the situation became hapless for all.

These are challenging times that the humankind is confronted with the unforeseen situations, questions without answers, ailments without cure that have baffled everyone alike. Although, one would have flattered oneself to believe that one is living in a times led by scientific enquiry, medical advancements and technological innovation but all such beliefs were falsified and hopes, belied by this much-dreaded outbreak.

Covid 19 has proven itself to be a great leveler, an idea which has often been debated a lot in the recent times. I firmly believe that it certainly has buffered one major difference between the rich and the poor. Though not financially, but emotionally, both the classes, the affluent and the not so affluent were left at the mercy of the corona virus. The inescapable feeling of helplessness, the anxiety regarding the wellbeing of one's near and dear ones, the disquietude regarding the future became a shared emotion. All the claims of having enough connections and influence to get things

done became invalid almost overnight. During those days, the following lines from James Shirley's poem "Death the leveler" kept reverberating in my mind.

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows not substantial things;
There is no armor against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings;
Sceptre and crown must tumble down;
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade

This pandemic has taught us the same thing that death will come to everyone regardless of any social status. It is in this regard that we can call coronavirus a leveller.

But like any other adverse times, this period too came with its positives. In a way, it proved instrumental in taking us back to basics. It put things in perspective for all of us by shifting our focus from the synthetic lives we had been leading to the realistic and the simpler version of life. It uncomplicated things for us as we began to see the priorities clearly and acknowledge the bounties of life that we had hitherto taken for granted. The new-found appreciation for the simpler things in life, be it the oft-neglected familial ties, the authentic homecooked food or the resurfacing of the medicinal herbs or spices in the form of the immunity-boosters. In addition to that, it bolstered the philosophy of taking one day at a time.

In simple words, this pandemic has basically taught all of us to value life with all its vagaries. We all have been so preoccupied living the life full of affectations and pretenses, all thanks to the social networking sites that many of us have lost touch with our real selves, our surroundings and with those real genuine moments that we have if we spend enough time with those whom we love.

Sometimes I really wonder how we would have enriched our lives by going back to our roots during the times of the COVID. If only the pandemic was not that fatal and malignant in nature but then I wonder when does life work according to us. All we can do now is to put aside wishful thinking, contribute whichever way we can to contain the pandemic by safeguarding ourselves and those around us, educate others if need be and most importantly, spread hope, optimism and positivity as they too are contagious.