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**Lessons from Covid**

It is the worst of times, the season of darkness and the winter of despair. It is the ghastly world of disease and death. A time when an unknown enemy has gripped the world and ravaged it with merciless ferocity.

There is flicker of irony and a touch of bitterness as the devastation sees no end, and has ushered in unrelenting social chaos and economic instability. In this time of adversity, Covid-19 may have taught lessons to humanity and introduced humans to themselves and to the glaring social realties obscured from theirvision.

The pandemic has exposed, ironically, the futility of the so-called robust healt care systems of the first world. The US, Europe, UK, China, and South Korea were profoundly impacted by the deadly disease at the outset, and till now the US, UK and Europe are grappling, tirelessly, to battle the disease with all their might and resources.

Lack of vaccines, shortage of ventilators and hospital beds were the main reasons of the mounting casualties. When in contrast with the fragile healthcare systems of the third world countries, the materially advanced countries did not perform any better in averting the catastrophe. Even though China was able to roll out vaccines much early and provide medical supplies all over the world, until more vaccines were manufactured and made available to affected countries there seemed no respite. A robust healthcare system thus emerged as the most important factor in determining the success of a country in pandemic times, overruling the global stakes on economic performance indicators.

If Covid-19 introduced humans to Kafka’s trial of unending and prolonged suffering, it also taught people a lesson for resilience and a return to the basics. Good fitness and a healthy diet became paramount. As health clubs were closed, many outlets of physical activity at home opened up. There was an overwhelming awareness of the importance of introducing a healthy lifestyle, made easy by social media, and motivational speeches of sports players and artists all over the world. Simple and home cooked food was preferred over restaurants and youngsters learnt a lesson that fast food should be dispensed to maintain good health. Connection with nature was revived as walks in parks became a favorite. In the words of Wordsworth, “Little do we see in nature that is ours; we have given our hearts away a sordid boon.”

Adversity prepared the way for economy. Due to lockdowns and restrained social activities, it was observed that marriages were held in an economical manner, within limited space, lacking ostentation and glamour. Similarly, unnecessary expenses were cut on funerals devoid of elaborate rituals of assembly and attendance. There was a freeze on social gatherings, parties, events and travel plans that may have considerably reduced the expenses of households. On the whole extravagance gave way to frugality and ostentation exchanged hands with simplicity.

In these testing times when people were working from homes, social mobility was severely restricted, schools and colleges closed, the overwhelming importance of friends and family came to the forefront. Social media groups became more active with frequent exchange of friendly messages, connectivity through zoom and video links. The unit of the family became pronounced and time spent with children mostly at home was considered rewarding. Friends were hailed and cherished with a passionate desire to catch up truly than just a token gesture. A new concept of home entertainment emerged. Reading books, music, movies, games, cooking, talking to friends were much revered activities in comparison to dining out, cinemas and travelling abroad whose avenues receded.

These are all good lessons learnt but unfortunately at a terrible cost with loss of precious lives and poverty rampant. Covid -19 is surging around the world. With adversity comes opportunity and preparation for greatness. Surviving difficult times develops courage and resilience against odds.

We learnt that health and not wealth remained triumphant in testing times. Even the mighty economic powers were crippled to the core. Investment in health, research and science, other than education, may count as the strengths of a nation. We learnt that the safety and security of family members, including the elderly, is sacred and should never be taken for granted. We learnt that eating healthy and living simply may be the best course of life when put to test. We learnt the importance of freedom, friends and outdoor activities as great blessings.

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