**The second wave of the demonic pathogen**

[M Alam Brohi](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/m-alam-brohi/)

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A few days ago, we lost Ambassador Waheed ul Hassan to this demonic pathogen. The angel of death was quicker enough to end his life within hours on reaching the hospital. He was gem of a person with a pleasant, kind, helpful and sincere disposition. The spontaneous outpour of grief by his colleagues and friends testify to his immense popularity. Even a person who had met him once in life fondly remembered his endearing, amiable and down to earth person.

After his brilliant career in the Foreign Service of Pakistan, he played leading role in matters of collective advantage of the public servants. His close coordination with the Federal Employees Housing Foundation to pursue the petitions for the revival of sector 14/15 in the Apex Court regularly updating colleagues all over the country was a shining example of selflessness. Waheed, you will be missed for years to come.

The demonic pathogen has returned with vengeance. The infections that had dropped to 300-400 in the country have progressively increased to 2500 a day putting enormous pressure on our limited healthcare facilities. The federal as well as provincial governments have not successfully sensitized the people about the deadly nature of the pathogen nor have they been seen taking strong measures to enforce the SOPs. We know that the only way to defeat this hidden enemy is to avoid crowded places, keep social distance and say no to handshake or embrace, use hand sensitizer or wash hands with soap frequently, wear mask.

We are strange as a nation. We have lost the sense of collective good. We look at everything from our individual, factional, clannish or institutional prism. Even in this pandemic when we are all vulnerable to the ravages of Covid-19, we have not abandoned our despicable and immoral manners of making money – hoarding masks, drugs, hand sensitizers and selling them at exorbitant prices or reducing our business hours and taking precautions in our shops and business centers.

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Our Ulema and political leaders who are supposed to guide the nation have been rather adding to the confusion of the not-so-literate masses telling them to continue to attend mosques for collective prayers. Nobody is there to check how far the SOPs are being observed at the places of worship and pilgrimage. The Ulema should have made it part of their Friday sermons to educate the people about the precautionary or preventive measures. Teaching people to leave everything to the Almighty is the worst of fatalism the Ulema are promoting.

Look at our political leadership. They would play dirty politics to ridicule, undermine and fail every measure taken by the government. The full-fledged electoral campaigns by all the mainstream political parties in Gilgit Baltistan showed how far seriously we have taken the challenge of the demonic pathogen! The leaders were seen wearing masks, none of their audiences, however, was doing so. As the federal or some provincial governments hinted to enforce 144 throughout the country to discourage assemblage of people, the opposition came out with the blunt rejection of the measure as an attempt to fail their upcoming public meetings.

Only the opposition could have an answer to the moot question whether their public meetings are more important than the collective health of the people. Who should explain to them the politics is a means to public service. The ultimate end of it is to gain power to uplift the wellbeing of the people. In the developed societies, the public welfare reigns supreme, and every political party that comes into power contributes to the development, prosperity and wellbeing of the people.

There is no place in their political systems for self-seekers, demagogues, tricksters, fraudsters, liars, corrupt. They have self-correcting and self-filtering mechanism. They exercise their electoral rights according to their conscience.Here we play politics in every matter – elections, accountability, health and wellbeing of the people. Really, we have yet to travel a long way to reach the political consciousness the other democratic nations are endowed with.

The PTI federal and provincial governments will be well advised to take all preventive measures to save the people of Pakistan from this deadly pathogen irrespective of what the hue and cry the opposition is going to make. They handled the first wave of the pathogen successfully to the surprise of the developed world. They should display the same vigour and sagacity to meet the growing challenge of the second wave of Covid-19 keeping in mind that their success on this count will be a great public service and their failure a public disaster. With some initial resistance or hesitancy, the people overall will appreciate the concern of the governments for their collective wellbeing. The opposition by resisting the preventive measures will only expose itself.

The federal government needs to closely coordinate with the PPP-run provincial administration of Sindh to make the preventive measures a success. I have just returned from a tour of the province. There is no understanding at all of the dangers of the pandemic and the needed preventive measures against the attack of the pathogen. The conspiracy theories abound. The people have the misplaced concept and understanding that the Covid-19 is a farce, and the government in Islamabad gets lot of money by inflating the number of the infections and gets thousands of dollars on every death – caused really by or attributed to – this disease. Islamabad is devouring all these donations. This is mind boggling.

Thiss is high time that we utilize all the manpower resources – teachers, Health field visitors, local government employees etc. available with us to educate our people. Nations that stand together in trials and tribulation come out stronger and stronger.