

Life in Lockdown: Of Poverty and Plenty

(Simranjot Kaur)

In what felt like our very own tailor-made episode of Black Mirror, the nationwide lockdown compelled us to live a new normal. Modernity and tradition met in a novel circumstance where places of worship closed their doors as the hospitals took over. The doctors risked their lives in overcrowded hospitals with barely fit to use hospital essentials while the streets reeked of unemployment and poverty that only the privileged could ignore. The livelihood of workers earning from paycheck to paycheck was lost while Indian women fought a different household battle. Turned out, living in a corruption-ridden, developing country did not groom us for a pandemic.

The general population's reaction varied from initial shock to panic to acceptance. Amidst the house arrest, we lost track of time as we failed to erase the similitude of every day, sagas of unintentional weight-gain became common, and sanity walks became a part of our daily self-imposed routines. However, the mental health of even the privileged ones did not remain immune to periodic feelings of despair and uncertainty which was amplified by the seemingly endless tragic losses of life and livelihood. As a student, the seriousness of the situation struck home when educational institutions were indefinitely discontinued and my law school became a ghost of its vibrant former self. The very fundamental rights of life and liberty became antithetical to each other as one's mere presence now threatened another's existence.

COVID-19 ensured environmental sensitization of the masses as we bartered our livelihood with a cleaner environment as green prevailed over greed. It simultaneously took a toll on the global economy, resulting in an economic bloodbath. While the gains were measured in lives saved, the costs were measured in currency of economic loss.

Once we get over the underbelly of India's wretched wealth inequalities, the plight of the migrants, the indifference of the authorities, the inadequate health facilities and overburdened health care workers, we might dare to call this an enlightening experience as our bubble of privilege allowed us to cherish the Covid-19-curated clear blue skies, the repossession of the streets by the animals, the no-shaving and no-pants policy, the new-found respect for our public health care system and police officials, but most of all, the quality family time. From seeing snow-capped mountains from dusty towns 200 kilometers away to humming Bella Ciao in the balconies, somewhere humanity rejoiced.

Here's to hoping we don't relapse and do come out of this as more empathetic human beings who don't look away while someone else rots and suffers. The lockdown has just ensured that our vulnerable selves remain unexposed to the virus that is still out there and bought the government

some time. Even though we see the restrictions easing in the near future, but large chunks of everyday life will continue to remain missing for a long time to come. We are nowhere near the end, but we'll get through this with a continued global community spirit.

'Other side of the COVID crisis: Police and administration.'

(Abhishek Bajpai)

Everyone in lockdown is quite fed up with themselves still they are indulging themselves in some or the other hobby to keep themselves busy and this is well and good enough to busy themselves and secure them from covid-19. But there is another side also which thankfully I was able to closely see, admire, learn, and teach myself as well as my friends.

While we sit in our cosy and comfort zones there are others no different from us standing in scorching Sun and fighting the virus as well as saving lives. Well by now it's clear that I am talking about police and administration, my father is an administrative officer and took me along with himself during during the lockdown this was when I came across what type of challenges he faces and it is worth mentioning that from inspecting the crowded markets to attending surprise pact immigrants from ensuring that nobody and sup empty stomach to distributing 400 packets per day of rations to poor, from challans to inspecting the crimes and we saw all of that and tackled it together and at night when we landed on our beds with every joint cracking, we had something in our heart, it was the feeling of contentment that this was all I could do, this was my contribution to people at the time of crisis.

There were many things I came across but it was the most depressing. On one fine evening we were playing badminton and a news slyly approached our ears but disturbed in best possible way. It was 'Inspector Brahma Datta Tiwari posted in Kanpur turned out to be corona positive.' Well he is my uncle and is still fighting the virus in Quarantine. We felt the fear and desire to meet him as quick but we knew we couldn't. It made no difference in our lifestyles, the very next day my father was back to his work and was into it with the same zeal and passion.

What is worth sharing is that they work under constant fear and danger of coronavirus from every single person they visit, treat, help or punish. But what disturbs the most is that people never see the bright side and only point the glitches out and search for every possible way to criticize them. Everyone loves his family but has anyone ever approached and asked a policeman's son and asked for how many days his father hasn't been home. One can't even imagine the constant trauma those family live in, when at any moment a news land flying in their ears and disband them and their hopes. So appealing to all if you can't be an asset then please don't turn into liability.

In the end I will just say-

You sleep you earn, They suffer but never turn

Love learn and heart be pure, Stay home stay secure

For you and me I demand a thing perfect

"I think they deserve a little respect"

Thank You

Name- Abhishek Bajpai

Class- BALLB 1st year

Roll No.-1910

It's a bright sunny day, the birds are chirping, the wind is blowing and the stray dogs are strutting around on empty streets. One can't help but feel a little offended at the "normalcy" of these things. How dare the wind blow when I can't go out to feel it on my face? Why does the Sun continue to keep rising as if everything is alright? I, personally, feel extremely disrespected by the fact that the Earth did not stop revolving as a sign of support.

One could say that this Pandemic is a tragedy and therefore making light of it is crass, but it's hard to ignore the absolute hilarity of the fact that one day a man decided to eat Bat Soup and 6 months later, we're not allowed to leave our houses anymore.

The world has been busy arming itself with Nuclear Weapons while the real enemy has been chilling in our backyards, hanging upside down from a tree. I almost feel cheated by Christopher Nolan for making us believe that "Batman" could be a good thing.

As we navigate these uncharted waters, one can't ignore the comedy in this tragedy. The handling of this crisis by our country, for instance, is absolutely comical. The fact that 21 million tonnes of wheat is wasted in India every year yet we have people dying of starvation right now, is ridiculous. The irony of the fact that the men and women who build our houses, don't have a house to quarantine in, seems to be lost on us.

The percentage of domestic violence cases registered at Sakhi One Stop Centres has increased from 40% in January to 89% in April. Liquor sales have resumed and the netizens are joking about the long lines at the shops, completely unaware of the role alcohol plays in incidents of Domestic Violence.

Videos of police brutality are being forwarded on Whatsapp as funny content. The urban are complaining about having to do housework, while migrant labourers are walking 500kms to their villages. The class privilege is so pervasive and entrenched in our society that we have failed to see the struggles of the have-nots. How, then, do you expect one to take this seriously? Reality seems to have merged into a P.G. Wodehouse novel and I can't quite control my laughter, Jeeves.

The biggest implication of the Corona Virus is that we as a people will have to come to terms with the fact that we are a dysfunctional society that has failed its most vulnerable in their hour

of need. However, the continued chirping of the birds and the relentless rising of the Sun gives one hope that all isn't lost. COVID-19 is the Thanos to our Avengers and we can defeat it if we come together, metaphorically, of course.

-AISHWARYA SINGH (1629)