

Let's dispel Corona clouds of gloom through positivity

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The daily dose of desperate news regarding Corona on the television these days is breeding an overall atmosphere of despondency and helplessness. But do we need to make it our staple diet, or even if it perforce comes our way, can't we do something to uplift our spirits? After all, as the Hindi proverb goes: Man ke hare haar hai; man ke jeete jeet (If your heart accepts defeat, then you are truly defeated; and if it believes in victory, then you indeed win). Lack of positivity is killing a percentage of patients who develop fear psychosis at the first sign of a Corona symptom or take the positive lab report to their heart. It can even make their attendants simulate Corona symptoms.

That the media is responsible for creating this overall atmosphere of negativity is no secret. The dominance of media in our lives is creating a kind of imbalance. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard had rightly predicted long back that man would live in images and on images – a kind of virtual life disjointed from the real one. So, now cocooned within the four walls of home, most of us are willy-nilly consuming images posted by reporters.

As for the reporters feeding us these images, the problem is that the first lesson that a budding reporter learns in a journalism school is that “good news is no news.” So, an unduly large share of space, particularly in visual media, is appropriated by the news of death and the dying. There is another angle to it as well. There is, we learn, big money to be made by selling images and video footages of gasping patients, wailing relatives and burning pyres to the foreign media.

This is not to suggest a ban on such news but come to think of it, what good does the repeated, and I wish to underline this word ‘repeated’, scenes of patients thronging the hospitals or of dead bodies being transported to cremation sites do except to horrify the viewers beyond a tolerable limit? This can lead to mental burnout of viewers and send a message to the patients that they had better write themselves off! The other possibility is to hasten the evolution of a society in which passivity to human suffering becomes the order of the day so that one loses sensitivity in all such matters. Neither of these scenarios is a desirable one.

Is there nothing positive on which we can fix our attention and avoid slipping into utter moroseness? We did tide over the first phase admirably well. Other countries including the developed ones have seen similar rise in numbers in the course of the second wave, so we are not the only ones. On the positive side, we are told, and let us believe it in spite of the nitpickers, that the positivity rate for Corona affliction has come down these days and that the recovery rate has gone up and mid-May or a little later the plateau is expected. The vaccination drive is on and a sizeable number of people have been vaccinated. This will go on increasing bringing near the herd immunity. Yoga and Ayurveda are being tapped by almost all people to advantage.

As for the shortages, one can derive solace from the fact that while within the country, things are on the move, the entire world including arch enemies China and Pakistan have offered help and indeed help in the form of medicines, oxygen and paraphernalia is pouring in from other countries. Those who criticized donation or export of vaccines to other countries now realize the worth of international cooperation.

India acted according to its civilizational values which have been validated by realization in our times that no island of humanity is secure from Corona unless the entire world is free from it.

“Faith can move mountains,” said Jesus Christ. Instead of scare-mongering or sensationalism, let the media focus more on positive news. Some TV channels have apportioned time to provide tips on Yoga or advice to tackle Corona. Similarly, newspapers are devoting space to such matter to benefit the readers. But unless the horrifying details are confined to a limited time and space, and not repeated ad nauseam, things will not improve. “Humankind,” said T.S. Eliot in his famous poem Four Quartets, “cannot bear too much reality.” Let us make it a rule to switch over to a different TV channel after the necessary information has been gleaned. There are channels that do not get riveted to a single story for half-an-hour when it can be summarized in two minutes. When the viewership rating of the channels making mountain of a molehill drops, they will get the message. Let us devote time recalling pleasant memories or reading good books. Let us create an atmosphere of positivity in which people gain confidence and muster the spirit to fight Corona rather than lose heart and invite doom.

END OF ARTICLE

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