

Covid Pandemic - A Moral View

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The gem of Urdu humor and satire Mushtaque Ahmed Yusufi (1923-2018) has quoted an incident in the preface of his great work 'Aab-e-Gum', that someone asked Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, 'what remarkable work you did in the French Revolution.' His three word answer is now the part of history. He said "J'aivecu."(I survived.)

After going through the Covid Pandemic, all of us should be really grateful to Almighty Allah that He bestowed His special blessings on us and we are here to take an account of the impacts of the horrible disease on different walks of life. The situation is far better in India. Barring some places, the normalcy has returned, though educational institutions and a few other sectors are still under siege. The world has been witnessing ups and downs and the fear of relapsing has overshadowed many big international deals, events, industries, trades, marketing etc. This was the deal of the century from the Almighty in which the supreme creation of the planet Earth does not have a 'say'. The well known Urdu short story writer and recipient of Sahitya Academy Award on his novelette 'EkChadarMailisi', Rajindra Singh Bedi (1915 – 1984) has written a short story 'The Quarantine'. The Quarantine is included in, 'Daana-o-Daam' the first collection of his short stories published in 1936. The quarantine was built to counter plague that spread in a town of Himalayan valley. The story revolves around the selfless heroics of William Bhago, the sweeper, who is an unlettered convert Christian, having really enviable faith in the Almighty, and working tirelessly for the cause of humanity. In the story, Bedi is on the top of his narratives while describing the horrible scenes of the quarantine. At one place Bhago says: *Babuji ..yehkontin todojukhhaidojukh...* (this quarantine is really a hell..). Then he describes an incident in which how the care takers and performers of the last rituals throw an unconscious but alive man with other dead bodies in to the fire and how he struggles to come out of it, and then our hero jumps in to flames and rescues the patient. While doing so he gets burns at many parts of his body. The peak of the incident is yet to come. According to Bhago, the patient was a real gentleman; even in that unbearable pain he thanked him and appreciated his love for humanity. Soon after the story takes an ugly turn as the patient died in agony and Bhago had to regret on his action saying: "How good it would be, had I not rescued him, I just caused him more pain after removing him from fire, now with my burnt hands, I threw him back in to the same heap." After that Bhago could not say much, crying with pain he just asked a simple question: "*aapjaantaehain..wohkisbeemari se mara? Plague se nahin..kontin se..kontin se..!*" (Do you know what did he die by? Not by plague..by quarantine..by quarantine..!)

The Covid Pandemic has shackled the world. During whole year we all witnessed and went through a type of an uncalled for cruelty in the current Covid Pandemic. We were helpless and unwillingly forced to leave our dear ones on the beds of death. The only access we could have through video calling that was also on the mercy of the attending doctors. The patient was left alone to die. The relatives were waiting for a final call and then the wrapped up body sent not at the residence but directly to the graveyard. The people lined up after the Imam, who was standing before the ambulance for the last prayer. Not many relatives, not many neighbors and sometimes not even brothers, sons and fathers performed the last rituals. Throughout, it was experienced that the hospitals and the medicos were not at their professional best. Not just the

heavy bills, even the dead body of someone else was sent to the relatives. At times, even the alive were listed as dead, and vice versa. No doubt there were innumerable professionals and even common people who set examples of selfless services and sacrifices by putting their lives in danger and many of them have achieved the fate of martyr. The straight forward question is that ‘Are we satisfied with the handling of entire scenario?’

There are many aspects to think and work on so that along with scientific and physiological precautions, we can be better human being while dealing with pandemic which is not yet completely over. The most important cause is “Fear of Death.”

Though we believe that death is most certain reality, we are afraid of facing it. A believer in God, irrespective of his religion, not only believes in its certainty but also conditions it with the time. William Bhago says to the doctor: “*Nahi Babuji.. binaa’ibaalbhibeekanahoga. Apittay bade hakim thahre, hajaro ne aapkehaath se sifapa’i, magar jab meriaa’ihogi to aapkidavadaarubhikuchhasarnakaregi.*” (Babuji, nothing will happen to me unless the time (of death) has come, you are a great doctor and thousands have been cured by you, but when mine (death) would come, your medicine will not work.” The Quranic wisdom is always with us to guide and help us decide the course of action. Here is the time just to remind ourselves:

“Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your (full) compensation on the Day of Resurrection. (Chapter 3 Verse 185)

“Say, Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector. And upon Allah let the believers rely.” (Chapter 9 Verse 51)

“And Allah should touch you with adversity; there is no remover of it except Him. And if He touches you with good- then He is over all things competent.” (Chapter 4 Verse 17)

There are many Prophetic Injunctions interpreting the teaching of the Quran and thereby strengthening our faith and removing the hesitations in taking proper decisions. Let’s recollect some of them:

“Ali narrated that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: “ A slave (of Allah) shall not believe until he believes in four: The testimony of La Ilah Illallah, and that I am the Messenger of Allah whom He sent with the Truth, and he believes in the death, and he believes in the Resurrection after death, and he believes in Al-Qadar.”

“Anas narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:”When Allah wants good for his slave, He hastens his punishment in the world. And when He wants bad for His slave, He withholds his sins from him until he appears before Him on the Day of Judgment.” And with this (same) chain, (it was reported) from the Prophet (ﷺ) who said: “Indeed greater reward comes with greater trial. And indeed, when Allah loves a people He subjects them to trials, so whoever is content, then for him is pleasure, and whoever is discontent, then for him is wrath.”

The responsibilities of healthy persons who are less vulnerable to disease increase a lot more and not shouldering them and leaving the affected people in misery is unpardonable social crime. This is the behavior least expected from a God fearing person, who is more concerned about the accountability before the Lord. The patients suffering in the pandemic deserve more than just the professional attitude and legal permissions. They need empathy and courage to develop a strong will to fight against the enemy and hope to regain health and prosperity. The sympathetic words, gestures and prayers can do miracles to distressed and disappointed patients but certainly it should be more than a formal pity-based response saying “Get well soon.” In fact ‘Empathy’ is required rather than ‘Sympathy’. Empathy is imagining oneself in the place of the affected one and then putting whole hearted efforts to provide maximum comfort. The affected

family should not be spared without support and cooperation. Playing safe is good but finding safe way out to provide maximum support is desirable. The relatives and neighbors should take care of food and other necessities in this testing time and the affected family though quarantined should not feel isolated and dejected.

The mutual confidence and we feeling is the essence of a good and healthy society and every Muslim is supposed to work for it. This is has been taught to us and is an inevitable part of our collective conscience. Narrated Abu Burda from his father that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Every Muslim has to give in charity.” The people asked, “O Allah’s Prophet! If someone has nothing to give, what will he do?”

He said, “He should work with his hands and benefit himself and also give in charity (from what he earns).” The people further asked, “If he cannot find even that?” He replied, “He should help the needy who appeal for help.” Then the people asked, “If he cannot do that?” He replied, “Then he should perform good deeds and keep away from evil deeds and this will be regarded as charitable deeds.”

This is high time that one should extend his support to the society in the best possible way and the Covid Pandemic has provided us an opportunity to strengthen the basic fabrics of the society.

Note:

Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, usually known as the abbé Sieyès, was a French Roman Catholic abbé, clergyman, and political writer who was a chief political theorist of the French Revolution; he also held offices in the governments of the French Consulate and the First French Empire. (wikipedia)

Rajinder Singh Bedi was an Indian Urdu writer of the progressive writers’ movement and a playwright, who later worked in Hindi cinema as a film director, screenwriter and dialogue writer. (wikipedia)

References:

- 1) Bedi Rajindra Singh, (1980), Dana-o-Daam, Maktaba Jamia Limited, New Delhi.
- 2) Yusufi Mushtaque Ahmed, (1990), Aab-e-Gum, Husami Book Depot, Hyderabad.
- 3) <https://quran.com/>
- 4) <https://sunnah.com/>

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