

COVID 19 - A blessing or a curse?

It was the 10th of July when Akram stepped out of his home with a mask on his face. He was wearing a blue full sleeves shirt along with grey pants of his choice. During lockdown, only his father used to go out for shopping therefore it was the 1st time he stepped out after the end of COVID-19 pandemic. As per news, the patients began to recover miraculously after the introduction of vaccine. Also the number of affectees was minimized from thousands to tens and the situation was fully under control now. Like we say everything that begins has an end and COVID-19 pandemic had also ended. Akram saw that no one was wearing a mask outside. He thought may be COVID-19 now has the status of a common flu now. He also removed his face mask to inhale the fresh air after a long time though his mother has advised him the opposite. He moved down the street to his friend's house. His friend's contact number was unreachable since 2 months, neither had he tried to approach him during this lockdown. He never expected that kind of behavior from his best friend. Finally the wait was over and he was banging the door of his best friend Ali's house. He shouted " Ali, come down! It is me Akram. How can you forget your best friend?" After a while Ali's mother appeared. Her eyes welled up on the sight of his son's best friend. She told him with a brittle voice "My dear, your friend is no more with us .The deadly virus took my son away forever". She began to cry and shut the door. Akram's eyes got filled with tears and his mind was recalling the time spent with his friend as he saw the football on the porch that they both played with. All such great memories sneak out of his eyes and roll down his cheeks. Akram turned around and started walking slowly down the road. As he was walking past the cemetery, he noticed that the cemetery was full of graves. He remembered that the last time he walked past the graveyard, there were only 4 or 5 graves. He kicked a pebble hardly in anguish and walked away. Suddenly, he remembered that old man who was also a story teller and told many interesting stories to Akram and Ali. Akram rushed towards his house and knocked the door but no one answered. He tried again but still no answer. Upon asking, a neighbor told Akram that the old man passed away 3 weeks ago due to COVID-19. Akram wished he had never left the home to hear such saddening news one after another. Akram decided to go back home. The market was nearby filled with people. While passing by the shop from where he used to buy sweets and grocery items, he got noticed by the shopkeeper. He called him by his

name “Ali come here! Won’t you buy your favorite sweets?” He smiled with a shattered heart and moved towards the shop. He noticed that the candies he used to buy for only 5 Rs. were now of 10 Rs. Upon taking a look at price of items, he realized that overall price of everything had increased. He inquired the shopkeeper reason of this price raise. First the shopkeeper remained silent for a minute but then he broke the silence and said, “My shop was closed during lockdown and my family has starved during this time. If I start selling the things on their old prices, then I would never be able to overcome my financial loss and my family would continue to suffer. This price raise is temporary to support my family. Akram then bought his favorite candies and left the shop. He noticed that shop was as clean as a shining mirror now although before COVID-19 this shop wasn’t as clean as it is now. This was the positive change caused due to this disastrous pandemic, he thought. He passed by a nearby industrial area. Before this pandemic this area was polluted and the sky appeared black because of the smoke and chemicals released by the factories and industries. To his surprise, he saw that the air was fresh and clean. Birds were chirping and there was no smoke coming out of the chimneys of these factories. He noticed that the flowers and grass had grown again in the flower pots and beautiful butterflies were there collecting nectar from the flowers. He then carried on his walk back home. At various places, he saw that many people were standing close (less than the distance of 3 ft) and no one was wearing face masks or using sanitizers like the COVID-19 had never happened. He also saw a group of kids playing football and many people were taking a walk or jogging. He imagined the pleasant sight of playing with his late friend, Ali. After walking for 2 or 3 minutes, he reached his home and told his mom about everything. His mom sighed and softly replied,” Corona has really changed the world. It spread like forest fire and killed many. Some wives lost their husbands. Some mothers lost their sons. Some daughters and sons lost one of their parents. Some brothers lost their sisters and some sisters lost their brothers. This teaches us that we should never take for granted the presence of our loved ones. It would be hard for them to accept the truth.” the news anchor on the TV was saying “this world has lost many heroes and warriors. Not all heroes wear capes. We want to thank all the doctors and police and all the people who helped us defeat corona virus.”