

Editorial

And how to become a governmental statistic.... inadvertently and play the other games?



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Yes, one fine morning, I suddenly became COVID positive and nothing so dramatic about it. At present, millions of them in the world out there have become the same. In fact, some of them have gone into the sadder aspects this statistic, namely; the fatalities. So, one should be thankful as long as it holds on.

So, my becoming COVID positive was nothing but, just a happening, a destiny! You see I was having few vague symptoms for a couple of days and just to “clear the air,” I decided get the rapid antigen test done in my own institution, which coincidentally turned out to be positive. So immediately, the official documentation was carried out by our authorities and my RT PCR was sent to GGSMCH, Faridkot for further processing. Being in the mild-to-moderate level of symptomatology and other formats, with the parameters holding on within their borderlines, inclusive of the radiological features, logically and naturally, I was advised “home quarantine” by our expert, the Pulmonologist! Whatever, the additional advice required was also provided and I came home!

So, here was I, at home, hunkering down for a longer haul, going through the rigors of the disease itself as well as the effects of the treatment aspects. Symptomatically, nothing to be actually alarmed about except high-grade fever, body aches and slight to moderate cough. Most of the other vital parameters were within the accepted borderlines, although on the lower side.

I was keeping track of my RT PCR result, for one to be absolutely sure and second, for validation of my “home quarantine” leave, although in my mind I was convinced of it being positive. But to my “utter surprise,” more than 5 days, elapsed and no intimation of results, no SMS, no WhatsApp message nor any phone call. As if my sample had vanished in the thin air. I thought, may be because the sample was taken on a Friday and then followed by weekend and on Monday, “Shree Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj Prakash Purab,” so this inordinate governmental delay. So, I decided to wait for one more day, the Tuesday, but still nothing happening. (Of course on that day, our intrepid, ICU staff in-charge, a highly active and enterprising character had managed to send me some persons’ list, some negative, some positive, out of them one positive name was mine). As a result, I had tacitly accepted the fact and fate, symptoms and other circumstances and kind of resigned myself to the larger picture and decided to settle down.

On Wednesday, as they call it “All hell broke Loose!!” No, no not in the terms of any deterioration of my general condition, which was more or less stable! But it started with an ambiguous phone call from some random number. Initially, I tried to ignore it, but then thought may be some person trying to inform me about my result. This was a reedy male voice saying, “Sat sri Akal! Tusi Marudul Pandatram bol rhe ho? (Raising my heckles, for completely distorting and destroying my name) Do you know, you have turned out COVID positive?”

Furiously, I pointed out, “First of all, whatever name you mentioned is not correct and more than 5 days have elapsed since my sample was sent and I have not received any confirmation from any government agency.”

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The reedy voice went on raspingly “Nah ji Nah! Assi vhi Punjab govt. toh hi bol rhe haan!”

I asked which office and what is your name?

So, he said, “My name is XYZA@#C and main falalna dhakana office chon boldaa haan.”

I wanted to ask many queries, but because, I was getting bit dyspneic, tired and in general frustrated, to cut the story short, I asked him, “why did he call and what does he want?”

So immediately he went on a rhetoric as follows, “You have to take your temperature and oxygen reading every morning and evening and send me on my, this WhatsApp number. Add me to your contact list.”

Bit annoyed, I asked why should I do that? He insisted, “Eek to eh karna bahut lazmi hai. Falaan falaan sahib bahut naraz ho jaange. Saannu, record maintain karna painda hai!” so on and so forth...!

Resignedly, I accepted it as a part of the game but I still had one query, “Je suppose kai mere paas na hi thermometer hai or na pulse oximeter, pher main ainvi nakli readings bhejaan?”

He said “Koi nahi, Civil Hasptal de piche ‘Red Cross Welfare Society’ da daftar hai, otthe kit milugi. Ode ch sab kuchch hunda hai.”

I asked “par meri report nahi aayee?”

His answer was, “oh saannu kuchch nahin pataa, assi taah apna record poora karna hai.”

After all this exchange, utterly disgusted, irritated, frustrated and shaken, I fell down on my bed.

But this was just the beginning. Eventually, on Wednesday, I received confirmation SMS from, VKMYGOVT, confirming officially positivity of my RT PCR. So, I requested a close acquaintance to show the message to this “Red Cross” place and see what actually happens about this so called “Kit.”

As I should have anticipated, the gentleman came back empty handed, with the message that, the kit shall be given to only the person, who has turned COVID positive. So, a “home quarantined” person, must go there, just to satisfy, the “sarkari farman,” I went there. To find this place is like going through an “amazing maze.” After going through twisted and turned very narrow gallian, the space, very large actually, opens up, where, in a very laidback manner, again, typical “Sarkari Baboos and Bhabhis” were enjoying the pleasant sunlight, chitchatting and passing the time in great enjoyment. As soon as they saw myself, their tete-a-tete being disturbed, there was a deep sense of displeasure on their faces. Anyway, after tons of unpleasantness, some major paper filing, perfunctory temperature checking, inordinate delay of nearly an hour, sitting in the flies infested shed on

some rusty iron benches, I was in possession of my “Nobel prize” of sarkari Corona Kit. Credit must be given where it is due, the kit contained, in addition to hand sanitizer, masks, electronic thermometer and most importantly, finger pulse oximeter with a variety of drugs inclusive of giloy vati and Ayush kwath (2 Ayurvedic preparations) and one electrical steam generator (which coincidentally blew up my microcircuit breaker).

As soon as I came home, there was a uninterrupted follow-up of telephone calls, one after the other. On that day, I received 17 different calls from, I do not know, who? Where? Why and how? It is simply impossible to remember or care for who these people were, raspy voiced government official sounding males, nasally voiced “auntieji” sounding females. One female whose identity on Truecaller came as “true corona warrior” started selling her services, with so much pestering that I had to block her number. Two enterprising persons created “Corona Monitoring Group BTD” and demanding the morning and evening recordings of temperature, pulse oximeter. Since that day, they made me in to a “statistic.” Till today, I keep on getting, these phone calls, messages, SMS and what not. Another very peculiar message every day, I receive in trilingual, Punjabi, Hindi and English and goes something like this.....we tried reaching you in regard to COVID home isolation program from Department of Health and Family Welfare, Punjab. We will try reaching you again. In case of any medical queries, please call, 08068972065. Believe me or not, till date nobody has tried to contact me and when, I tried calling at that number it said. “yeh number Astitva mein nahin hai.”

The point of whole discussion brings out very clearly the “rot” and “jugadoo”/callous attitude of our governmental system. The high officials in their highfalutin, air conditioned and cozy offices want to create certain, policies, no doubt with some amount of peppering of public welfare. On paper, they appear fantastic, magical and in the deep interest of the needy. However, by the time it comes down to ground reality level, “all the hell has broken loose.” There is a total chaos, discoordination, callousness and in general lethargy. The sample collection taking place and SMS of the report takes minimum of 5–6 days? But, as soon as that conversion of a person to a “statistic” took place, all kinds of players, mostly lowly, government baboos/bhabhis jump the band wagon. Now is the time to impress higher ups, show how seamlessly and efficiently the paper plans created by them have been implemented by these minions, or I do not know for what sheer vested interest, at any cost “statistics” must be created/generated, perpetuated, if required promulgated, falsified, or spiced up and to do whatever it takes to remain in the good books of the superiors. It is even worse when it comes to individuals like “true corona warrior” lady, (whom, I had to block, I am sure a medical person), when they are pestering with their relentless calls to brazenly, sell their services.

We as normal healthy human beings, although part of same society are not even aware about these “Dirty Games,” which are being played around us, till we ourselves do not become a “Statistic.” Then, the true nature of all the undercurrents, hanky-panky and total destruction of ethical fabric becomes exposed.

If it is happening in this state, I am pretty sure, similar or better or worse versions of these games are going on in every state of our “great Motherland.”

It would be my sincere plea to those important, officials, regulatory bodies, or anyone who can make a difference, to take a cognizance of the “mockery of the system” in the name

of creating, perpetuating and twisting around this dirty game of “Statistics!!”

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