

## Vaccination: state vs citizens

By **Hasaan Khawar**

For the last several weeks, I have been having a never-ending discussion with a domestic staff who is nearly 70 years' old and is refusing to get vaccinated. All my reasons have failed but his repertoire of arguments keeps expanding.

We have been over the fact that while death is predetermined as per our faith, it can be argued both ways. If it indeed is predetermined, then he really doesn't have anything to fear by getting vaccinated. I also tried to set an example by getting vaccinated myself, but it hardly made a difference.

Now with all the conspiracy theories in the air — magnets sticking to shoulders and vaccinated people going to die within two years — he seems more convinced than ever. His WhatsApp is buzzing with cock-and-bull stories which have given credence to his version in his mind.

I must confess that logic has been defeated, and all my efforts to bust these myths have been unsuccessful.

A few months ago, when the Covid-19 vaccines were introduced, I was quite skeptical about our government's access to adequate supply and its ability to vaccinate such a large population.

I am happy to acknowledge that I was wrong. The government's vaccination drive has been commendable. Till date about seven million doses have been administered, vaccinating over five million people. People with 30+ years can now opt for walk-in vaccination while for 19 to 30 years old, registration has started. As per most people's account, their experience at vaccination centres has ranged from reasonable to exceptional. The registration process through NADRA has worked well, notwithstanding a few glitches; and those wanting the vaccination certificate can get that with the click of a button. All in all, it has been a first-world experience in a third-world country, something that makes me incredibly proud.

We have so far received 11 million doses of vaccines, but even this limited supply has outpaced demand. That's the reason why the government has been able to successfully bring down the qualifying age. While we would need much more vaccines and a long time to vaccinate a significant part of the population, for now it's the citizens who are lagging and not the state.

IPSOS recently conducted a survey and found out that two out of every five Pakistanis disagree with getting vaccinated against Covid-19, putting Pakistan amongst the least eager nations to get vaccinated.

Such delay in or refusal to getting vaccinated despite availability is called 'vaccine hesitancy', which is not specific to Pakistan and is present globally. But as opposed to the West, where people are mostly apprehensive about expedited trials and side effects of vaccines, in our case, it's complacency, mistrust, religious reasons, rumours and conspiracy theories that are contributing to it.

A recently published paper analysed 637 Covid-19 vaccine-related items posted on social media from 52 countries and found out that only 5% were true. Out of the rest, 83% were false, 10% were misleading, and 2% were exaggerated.

The Pakistani state has so far done its part in getting us the vaccines. Now it's time for us to do our part. Let's not play a role in spreading these rumours. We must remember that irrespective of the efficacy, the vaccine can protect us from getting seriously sick. We need to get vaccinated not only for ourselves but also for those around us. And we need to vaccinate a large majority of population as soon as possible, so that we can return to normalcy.

On the government's part, there is a need to closely monitor online conversations around vaccination, better understand the reasons behind vaccine hesitancy in Pakistan, and launch an extensive communication campaign to address these reasons.

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## Dealing with child abuse | How to control this issue?

By Muqqadas Ijaz

Any behaviour which makes a child feel uncomfortable is referred to as child abuse. The effects of abuse on a child are serious and longlasting.it is a leading cause of emotional, behavioral, and health problems across his or her lifespan.

Any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent, guardian, caregiver or another person in a custodial role that results in harm, potential for harm or threat of harm to a child.

The effects of abuse on child are serious and long-lasting. Child abuse can take many forms, including physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, bullying, or plain neglect. In many cases child abuse is done by someone who are very close with the child, when he or she feels secure with a close person. If we suspect child abuse, we want to report the abuse to proper authorities.

The relation between the child and parent may be sequestered and the child may appear to be solicitous, and for comfort and support the child may find someone else to be their loved ones.

Child abuse is a major social issue for all countries. It has a wide range of adverse consequences for children and young people. An overview is provided of the possible effects of child abuse. To protect the child from abuse we must protect every single right of a child to ensure their security.

It has not been long since the case of Baby Zainab from Kasur, a city in Punjab, made the headlines in the media. As if that case was not enough, 200 more cases of sexual abuse were detected from the same city.

In the past few years in Pakistan there have been so many cases of child abuse reported in the media. The concern over the rising incidence of child abuse have received global attention.

A number of national and international organizations have shown serious concerns and are demanding to tackle the issues of child protection.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse as any act that causes physical harm to the child. The type of injuries, including severe beating, shaking, burns, fractures, are included in this.

Children believe that everyone loves them, but parents must want to teach their children that no one can love them as much as parents. Everyone else is a stranger for them

Without physical contact, abuse includes passing of sexual comments or verbal sexual abuse. With physical contact, it includes kissing, hugging or touching in a sexual abuse, fondling and oral sex.

Child abuse is of global prevalence. Globally 73 to 150 million girls are subjected to abuse every year. In India, a neighbouring country with similar socio-cultural background reported that two thirds of children are beaten at home or schools every year. 52 percent have admitted some form of sexual abuse.

Child protection is a concept that aims to safeguard children from physical and sexual abuse and effects of war.

The forced involvement of child in sexual activity also comes in terms of child abuse because the child is not so mature and mentally prepared for it, so he may face fear and discomfort.

Pakistan is both nationally and internationally committed to fully protect the rights of its children.

Children who suffer abuse or neglect are more likely to have an emotional disturbance. Their internal feeling, emotion and their inner self become weak and feel lonely and often they do not share their pains with others because they also developed trust-related problems. Children also develop the feeling of abasement, abhorrence, anguish, melancholy and acerbity and there is a greater chance that all these feelings may lead to attempts at suicide because of inner dissatisfaction.

Because of the abuse suffered by children, they may have physical marks like those of burning, carving, wounds, mental illness and many more serious injuries and harms which may be so severe that they can lead to death. So, the children that become the victims of child abuse are not physically well, while their mental state also suffers because of the physical ill-health.

They are not well groomed because of the provided environment, so they do have a well-developed personality. The abused children have fewer friends because they do not like to be social and they are not ambitious. They don't have a fixed goal in their life. They have a feeling of self-blame, shame and stigmatization. Child abuse victims may suffers insecure and disorganized attachment with their primary caregiver .As normally the parents are the primary caregivers, and they have a deep and a closer attachment with their children but for the children who suffers child abuse the parents becomes the source of harm and threat so that they do not developed a interpersonal relation with their children .

Children do not share their feelings with parents and become deeply tense which will have a negative consequence on their personality as well as their social and personal life. Child abuse is a maltreatment which is violent and threatening for a child. It is a serious problem that has long lasting effects not only on the children but also the families and even the generations. The impact of child abuse may be in term of physical, psychological,

behavioural ,and emotional ill-effects. The children are suffering from this issue and developing a negative behavioural pattern which is harmful for them as well as for society. The outcomes of child abuse are highly adverse and develop an uncomfortable environment all over the surrounding society. Though it is a serious problem the government has not been looking into it with the needed focus and therefore it is widely spreading .It is the duty of the government to have an austere and deep look over it in order to resolve it and to save the children as they are the future of a country. It is necessary to develop preventive programmes and enforce the laws which have been assed dealing with this issue.

*Published in Daily Pakistan Today*

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## Electoral reforms

By Dr Niaz Murtaza

THE month of May found this rational, focused nation locked in technical debates on election reforms. The outcomes were oddly and unluckily iffy. The Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) made an impassioned plea for us to debate the proportional representation (PR) system in place of the constituency-based first-past-the-post (FPTP) one.

It says PR is fairer in giving seats to parties in proportion to their national vote tallies. In FPTP, a party may win seats with less than 50 per cent of votes cast for each seat and gain overall majority with less than 50pc of national votes. The PTI-led alliance represents only 37pc of voting, 22pc of registered and 12pc of the total population. Globally too, many say PR better represents all societal sections and allows smaller parties to win. But the more critical issue is if PR gives political stability and good governance. Fafen gives no proof of that. So, let's first review for stability. If seats were given in 2018 along national vote tallies as under PR, PTI and its allies would have won 128 seats as against their 175-plus seats via FPTP. They would've lacked a majority without allying with another party/parties. That would have meant even more instability, this being true for all recent polls.

To curb such trends, states using PR require parties to get, say, at least 5pc of national votes to get seats. If we apply that rule to recent polls, the results are stunning. In 2018, only the PTI, PML-N and PPP (in 2013 the MQM too) would have won seats. Others with 30pc of the votes would have been excluded. The big three would have won more seats than their national vote tallies, thus nixing PR's claims on fairness and giving space to small parties. Even so, none of the three may have obtained a majority without allying with an arch-rival. So PR may result in fragmentation or in avoiding that, unfairness like the FPTP. Once PR is really used, actual vote tallies may differ. But this still highlights the risks.

Some say PR reduces the role of electables and curbs dynastic politics. Sri Lanka uses PR and yet has one brother as president and the other as prime minister while overall politics is dynastic too. Nor is there proof that PR gave good governance. If Fafen wants a serious debate on PR, it must go beyond short press releases and produce a detailed policy paper with weighty proof to remove doubts that PR may not give fairer representation, let alone political stability or good governance. Until then, we must avoid PR given the risk of further political fragmentation and weakening of political forces and strengthening of the already overly powerful non-political forces. It also strengthens top party leaders vis-à-vis other leaders and cuts the links between MPs and constituencies.

A neater solution for FPTP unfairness due to people winning with less than 50pc of constituency-level votes is to have all voters assign second choices (ranked choice

method) too. Then in case the top candidate wins less than 50pc votes, there could be an instant virtual run-off between the top two candidates (rather than expensive, time-delaying actual run-offs later) by counting the second choices of voters of other candidates. This will ensure the majority party has at least 50pc of votes cast based on ranked choices nationally.

Frustratingly, Fafen is not the only key entity pushing unproven ideas. PTI is pushing for electronic voting machines for the next polls, ignoring transition issues and the problems other states using them have had. The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics held a seminar where speakers pushed some iffy ideas like PR, term durations of three to four years and staggered national and provincial elections so we have one each year. The issue with such ideas is there is no proof globally that they give political stability or good governance.

India and Bangladesh are doing much better with an electoral system like ours and are not constantly chasing wonky political ideas. Our problems of misrule can't be tackled via electoral tinkering but via non-controlled democracy with no role for unelected institutions. Thus, our key institutions often focus on trivial rather than priority issues.

What really are the priority issues? A look at the EU 2018 election report is helpful. It makes blunt charges of pre- and post-poll rigging against powerful unelected forces. But one rarely finds Fafen and others focusing on this pervasive and pernicious source of rigging. This problem can't be overcome via technical electoral reforms but via political mobilisation by political parties to challenge these forces, as the PDM briefly did. With its failure, the onus is on civil society to engage jointly in social mobilisation against this problem. Failing even that lonely op-ed writers will be left to keep raising the issue by themselves.

*The writer is a political economist.*

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# Political theories, morality and capitalism

By Barrister Humayun Sarfraz

Capitalism is defined by its sole motive of maximum profit which is recently proven by giving patents to corona vaccines even when uncertainty has engulfed almost the whole world. Beside its positive contributions to humanity, this aspect of capitalism has always raised questions of it being universal in nature, meaning thereby that it favours resource-rich persons or nations.

Every theory with the claim of its universal application on earth mostly failed because it became unable to answer the needs or complexities that arise with the changing world or political scenarios. With the advent of the industrial revolution, every other theory lost its importance with capitalism its driving force and Marxism with the agenda to provide solutions for the rest of the population which were or still have suffered at the hands of the current political and economic order with Europeans its main beneficiaries and rest of the world as a victim. Though difficult to single out any specific reason for Marxism's failure, it ended up in books to be read as a political struggle against capitalism or its ruthlessness and potential to suck resources from poor nations and utilisation by the ruling economic and political classes of the world. Another major political and economic philosophy which has survived for centuries is Islam however, it has only been reduced to a religion.

The post-9/11 world is one where every political theory has lost its importance besides capitalism and the current generation is almost unaware of the debate that engulfed the last century with capitalism as its winner. The basic phenomenon for every economic theory is the distribution of resources, which is the key criterion; to which capitalism has only catered in this consumer-based world.

The basic question is—how is economic theory compensated by the political theory; that is where every other theory failed and the west provided the solution to problems of the modern world with democracy as the key political philosophy that controls the ruthlessness or bad nature of capitalism at least for their own population with the introduction of political theories that controlled almost every danger posed by capitalism to their people with the advent of welfare state as the key political norm. With the passage of time, democracy gave a solution to almost every evil faced by the people, from slavery to equality before the law and the introduction of universal principles of human rights.

In my view, that is where every other philosophy failed because it does not provide any safeguards against economic exploitation and that was where Marxism failed because it

failed to cater the ruthlessness or bad aspect of its economic science as they thought human nature has been polluted by the uneven distribution of wealth.

And that is also the basic problem because the east political system does not or is not able to control the monster of capitalism and its negative impact and hence failed to benefit its positive contributions that have been availed by the west. Hence a strong political theory is needed in the east so that the whole world can benefit from the capacity of capitalism to produce or generate or use resources or economic welfare.

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## Afghan peace

By Senator Rehman Malik

Afghanistan is advancing towards the stone ages with the unending conflict with no gain. The Afghan Taliban are picking up more strength and the march towards Kabul has started. A recently returned western diplomat from Kabul called on me who informed me that Kabul is under the grip of panic and rumours. According to him, Kabul is likely to be vacated by diplomats and other foreigners out of fear. This is very alarming and the world needs to halt further bloodshed of innocent Afghans. This could be stopped by the urgent initiative of world powers particularly the USA. I hope my views below may give some outline for immediate peace in Afghanistan. I am drawing the special attention of President Joe Biden who will consider my heartfelt points jolted below for his consideration of the non-ending killings of innocent Afghans in the unwarranted conflict. Mr President, it is unfortunate that world powers including the US are having divergent views on agreeing to a one-point agenda which is nothing but "peace", with no other option except peace. Your decision to withdraw the army is great but it will create a civil war if you withdraw troops without a pragmatic exit strategy to stop the civil war. This is a very important point for your consideration.

If the world powers do not converge on one point of bringing peace to Afghanistan, then I see the Taliban marching towards Kabul and every passing day becomes dangerous for the anti-Taliban/non-Taliban government and the Afghan society. The killing of innocent Afghans has started and if it continues there will be mass migrations of Afghan refugees to the neighbouring countries and we will witness another brand of the 'Zaliman'; creating trouble on a large level in the world.

It was very disappointing when I heard from the president of Afghanistan while giving an interview that "his death is only one bullet away". This statement coming from the sitting president of Afghanistan, attacks on schools, attacks on the Afghan Army via Herat and the killing of 100 of soldiers and the blood of innocent Afghans and the pain of injured children are unable to attract the attention of the leaders of the world powers.

I will explain why I used the term 'hired-Taliban' and how an engineered justification was planned to justify drone attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan and these operations are on record with many other facts which were misrepresented. I owe it to the nation to disclose some hidden and shocking aspects /factors behind some such incidents which you all will see in my coming book. I only remind the world powers to not allow the unaccountable killings of poor Afghans and let them not become victims to world politics.

The American Army is still in Afghanistan and the innocent people are still being butchered from both sides to play a power game at the cost of the lives of innocent Afghans. I have seen fears in the eyes of young poor children who will be victims of the

post-withdrawal scenario. Rich Afghans/diplomats will fly away but the common man once again will be the victim of the Taliban.

Pakistan must move with other friendly countries and bring a resolution for the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in Afghanistan apart from an Islamic Force—if it exists or will ever come into being as per my proposal—to be based in Saudi Arabia.

Let the Taliban and the present Afghan government be forced to sit at the table to work out a peace transition and formation of the government as per the wish of the people of Afghanistan.

I know what is being thought in the capitals of the world power at the moment and world power frictions must come to end to bring peace in war-torn Afghanistan.

I propose that let the Pentagon under President Joe Biden take the initiative to take solid steps for peace in Afghanistan and let us set objectives to determine the unrest and killing of innocent people as enemies of humanity and avoid another round of killings in Afghanistan by engaging China, Russia, the UK, the UAE, Pakistan, and Iran for the sake of the tired Afghans from this useless war of 30 years.

My country has made tremendous sacrifices for peace in Afghanistan and I am myself witness to this non-ending war. Since the US invasion of Afghanistan, more than 60,000 Pakistani civilians, security forces personnel, and women and children have been killed across the country apart from huge devastation to its economy and basic infrastructure. Pakistani economy suffered a total loss of \$126.79 billion due to the war on terror from 2001 to 2018. According to a Brown University study in 2019, the US had spent around \$978bn since 9/11, and US forces have suffered more than 2,300 deaths and around 20,660 soldiers injured in action. President Ghani said in 2019 that more than 45,000 members of the Afghan security forces had been killed since he became president five years earlier. And, according to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), nearly 111,000 Afghan civilians have been killed or injured since it began systematically recording civilian casualties in 2009.

Pakistan has brought both the government and the Taliban on the table and it worked well and it is time for the US and the world to play a vital role in the restoration of peace in Afghanistan. So far, the world has failed as every effort for peace was signed with a longer timeline giving the latitude of time to anti-peace groups.

President Joe Biden, you are the right president with the right tone, and you have the ability to bring real peace to Afghanistan. The present army chief, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, is fully determined to bring peace to Afghanistan. I am sure you would manage to bring peace with a proper strategy in collaboration with Pakistan. The region is looking towards you to use your influence to give peaceful Afghanistan to the world not with built but through your statesman skills.

Mr. President! Convert this tragedy of Afghanistan into happiness and enable the Afghan future generation to live their lives their way and not under the fears of roaring guns. Let

reality take over perception and let us admit that the Afghan war was a useless exercise that created more terrorism than peace. Admitting a national mistake will make you look taller among world leaders.

The world wants peace in Afghanistan President Joe Biden, and you have the opportunity to win the hearts and minds of the Afghans in particular and the world in general by bringing peace there. I am sure you are not going to repeat firing the mother of the bombs on Afghanistan as the former US President Donald Trump did. Afghan has become a punching bag for many stakeholders and we hope it will end soon.

A highly rational and objective analysis would conclude that the US and its allies including former PM Tony Blair and many others would be regretting the launching of this so-called war on terror in Afghanistan. Let us rectify our mistakes in our lifetime as we seniors will not be there in the world to narrate the hidden secrets and realities to the historian.

It is time to converge the world powers to one-point agenda of peace and this proposal may come in UN by yourself and let a delegation of Afghan Taliban be invited to White House as has previously been done by President Reagan when delegates were regarded high as they were to be used against USSR as per the war plan. These are the same Taliban and now fighting against the USA and the Afghan government. There is no harm to invite them to the White House in the presence of President Ashraf Ghani who also owes to the USA having been educated in the USA on American scholarship. Let this trilateral meeting take place in the White House to resolve the Afghan issue once for all, and trust me Mr. President, your initiative to bring both the parties to the table in the White House will bring long-lasting peace in Afghanistan. This would be an honourable exit for the USA and everyone who remained associated with this war.

President Joe Biden is only one call away from all the above-mentioned leaders of the world power and your one call to every one of them will convince and converge on one page to stand with you to restore peace. I am sure the presidents of China and Russia will not say no to you and Pakistan is already working hard to get peace restored in Afghanistan in this peace process. Mr. President, please consider creating this forum of world powers for the sake of peace for the future generations of Afghanistan.

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## Internationalise the Kashmir conflict

By Dr Farid A Malik

When the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Turkey, Oman and Sudan landed in New York to demand a ceasefire in Gaza the Israeli guns were silenced. The United Nations General Assembly succeeded in enforcing a ceasefire. The Foreign Minister (FM) of the only Islamic nuclear power of the world returned to a hero's welcome arranged by his family at the Chaklala Air Base. Rose petals were showered over him. He spoke triumphantly and demanded a resolution of the Palestinian conflict. Peace in the ancient land can only be achieved with Arab unity, together with the support of the Ummah.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi (SMQ) has been at the helm of the foreign office twice. He was removed from this position by President Asif Ali Zardari over the Raymond David debacle in January 2011. After the mammoth PTI Jalsa at Lahore in October same year, he joined Kaptaan's team.

'Rose petal political players' are a special breed who never lose an opportunity to project themselves. Jahangir Khan Tareen (JKT), Shehbaz Sharif (SS), Maryam Safdar all appear in the courts with their supporters who shower rose petals on them to establish their reverence. In the Sufi tradition showering flowers is looked down upon. When the great Mansoor Hallaj was being taken for his execution, one of his disciples threw flowers in praise of his cause and he got very upset. "When one is on the righteous path, the flowers hit like stones"—that is the Sufi way.

I closely watched the trial of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) at the Lahore High Court (LHC) in the seventies. He fought his legal battle with dignity and grace despite the extreme bias of the then Chief Justice Maulvi Mushtaq. To avoid personal humiliation, he should have boycotted the court but he decided to present his case hoping to get relief from the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP). A national leader of his standing fought his legal battles without cheap theatrics. His last address to the SCP is now a part of history which was later published under the title, 'Witness to Splendour'.

Kashmir is the unfinished agenda of the partition of the Indian Subcontinent. Quaid-e-Azam termed it as the 'Jugular Vein' of Pakistan as all our rivers flow from the valley. Since August 2019, Kashmir has been under the boots of the Indian Army. A curfew and human rights violations continue unabated. With so much tyranny in our own backyard, the issue has not been internationalised. I am sure the FM was pushed to go to Turkey to forge an alliance which then travelled to New York. While the Arab nations do not support us on Kashmir, we do have the support of other Muslim brethren like Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia. It is time to pay back India in the same coins as they did to us in 1971 to

dismember Pakistan. The Bangladesh model of internationalising the uprising in former East Pakistan can be followed. In the eastern wing we had only about 50,000 troops while India has over 800,000 in Kashmir. Our embassies and delegations should be holding conferences and organising demonstrations to highlight the plight of the Kashmiris. Two United Nations resolutions remain un-implemented despite the passage of several decades. Ethnic cleansing similar to Palestine continues in the valley. What are we waiting for? Time is running out, it is now or never. Kashmir is crying for help. While we hear their screams, the world does not. It is our duty that their SOS (Save our Soul) message reaches every corner of the world before it is totally silenced.

There was a time when the Foreign Office was professionally led by heavyweights of their field. Sir Zafarullah Khan was the first to lead the department. Then ZAB and Sahibzada Yakub Ali Khan led from the front. It was ZAB who was the chief architect of the Pak-China friendship which then turned into 'Iron Brothers'. After over seven decades, the bond has resulted in the most important project of the country under the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) called CPEC under which a corridor is being built all the way from Kashgar to Gwadar. If Shaukat Tarin can be inducted to lead the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should also be under professional foreign policy stalwarts like Senator Javed Jabbar or Ambassador Munir Akram who is currently our permanent representative to the United Nations. Nawaz Sharif operated without a FM, while Zardari first tried SMQ and then appointed a novice, Ms Hina Rabbani Khar to head this important department. Substance-less stewardship of such an important portfolio will get us nowhere.

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## Lessons from Covid

By **Beelam Ramzan**

It is the worst of times, the season of darkness and the winter of despair. It is the ghastly world of disease and death. A time when an unknown enemy has gripped the world and ravaged it with merciless ferocity.

There is flicker of irony and a touch of bitterness as the devastation sees no end, and has ushered in unrelenting social chaos and economic instability. In this time of adversity, Covid-19 may have taught lessons to humanity and introduced humans to themselves and to the glaring social realties obscured from their vision.

The pandemic has exposed, ironically, the futility of the so-called robust health care systems of the first world. The US, Europe, UK, China, and South Korea were profoundly impacted by the deadly disease at the outset, and till now the US, UK and Europe are grappling, tirelessly, to battle the disease with all their might and resources.

Lack of vaccines, shortage of ventilators and hospital beds were the main reasons of the mounting casualties. When in contrast with the fragile healthcare systems of the third world countries, the materially advanced countries did not perform any better in averting the catastrophe. Even though China was able to roll out vaccines much early and provide medical supplies all over the world, until more vaccines were manufactured and made available to affected countries there seemed no respite. A robust healthcare system thus emerged as the most important factor in determining the success of a country in pandemic times, overriding the global stakes on economic performance indicators.

If Covid-19 introduced humans to Kafka's trial of unending and prolonged suffering, it also taught people a lesson for resilience and a return to the basics. Good fitness and a healthy diet became paramount. As health clubs were closed, many outlets of physical activity at home opened up. There was an overwhelming awareness of the importance of introducing a healthy lifestyle, made easy by social media, and motivational speeches of sports players and artists all over the world. Simple and home cooked food was preferred over restaurants and youngsters learnt a lesson that fast food should be dispensed to maintain good health. Connection with nature was revived as walks in parks became a favorite. In the words of Wordsworth, "Little do we see in nature that is ours; we have given our hearts away a sordid boon."

Adversity prepared the way for economy. Due to lockdowns and restrained social activities, it was observed that marriages were held in an economical manner, within limited space, lacking ostentation and glamour. Similarly, unnecessary expenses were cut on funerals devoid of elaborate rituals of assembly and attendance. There was a freeze on social gatherings, parties, events and travel plans that may have considerably reduced the

expenses of households. On the whole extravagance gave way to frugality and ostentation exchanged hands with simplicity.

In these testing times when people were working from homes, social mobility was severely restricted, schools and colleges closed, the overwhelming importance of friends and family came to the forefront. Social media groups became more active with frequent exchange of friendly messages, connectivity through zoom and video links. The unit of the family became pronounced and time spent with children mostly at home was considered rewarding. Friends were hailed and cherished with a passionate desire to catch up truly than just a token gesture. A new concept of home entertainment emerged. Reading books, music, movies, games, cooking, talking to friends were much revered activities in comparison to dining out, cinemas and travelling abroad whose avenues receded.

These are all good lessons learnt but unfortunately at a terrible cost with loss of precious lives and poverty rampant. Covid -19 is surging around the world. With adversity comes opportunity and preparation for greatness. Surviving difficult times develops courage and resilience against odds.

We learnt that health and not wealth remained triumphant in testing times. Even the mighty economic powers were crippled to the core. Investment in health, research and science, other than education, may count as the strengths of a nation. We learnt that the safety and security of family members, including the elderly, is sacred and should never be taken for granted. We learnt that eating healthy and living simply may be the best course of life when put to test. We learnt the importance of freedom, friends and outdoor activities as great blessings.

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