

# A thank-you and some notes from a Delhi hospital ward

For every belief or action, let's ask the question, writes the author who tested positive and is in hospital, what if every other citizen were to think or act like me?

**AJIT MISHRA**

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IT WAS shortly before midnight that I, along with another gentleman, was moved from Ram Manohar Lohia to Safdarjung Hospital, after having tested positive for COVID-19. As we moved down the stairs and through the gate towards the waiting ambulance, there were onlookers, about a dozen, even at this time of the night.

They were, of course, maintaining a sufficiently safe distance; not that there was any

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chance of anyone catching anything from us as we were in full protective gear. It was obvious that they were trying to get a good look at us. It didn't feel too bad because we were indistinguishable from the medical staff and ambulance driver accompanying us, until we reached the rear door to the ambulance.

This may or may not be a stray incident but it describes

our general attitude to the current corona crisis: obsessive curiosity, fear and ignorance. Despite loads of useful information supplied by various government agencies and WHO, and continuous updating of information and instructions, people still treat WhatsApp (or similar media) as the source of their life-saving information and recipes.

There is a tendency by many to treat the infected (or even potential patients) as dangerous criminals. I read reports that some residents objected to asymptomatic individuals, under home isolation or observation,



Safdarjung Hospital, where the writer is admitted. *Tashi Tobgyal*

stepping out to their balcony or verandah to get some fresh air — even though they were at a distance more than 10-15 metres.

Mind you, these people ob-

jecting are not uneducated, they probably know that the virus is not going to travel that far, but being self-centered that they are, they don't want to take any

chance. Very soon they may refuse to breathe the same air! We may degenerate into some of the unthinkable World War II scenarios.

The sad part is that we refuse to learn from the exemplary courage and dutifulness of our own people. Inside the ward, I see how doctors, nurses, attendants, housekeeping staff go about their work in treating patients with diligence and without fear. They do wear protective gear but let us not forget they are treating individuals who are infected with this virus.

They are in close contact: taking blood, temperature, blood pressure and giving medication. I met someone in the ward who was being tested for possible infection because he/she was car-

ing for a patient who turned out to be COVID-19 positive. I hope he/she is not infected, but imagine the cost this nurse has to bear for doing the job during this crisis.

How will this individual feel if he or she and his/her family were to be treated as a dangerous nuisance? They deserve compassion, at the least. It is right that the service of the care staff has been being highlighted during the Janata Curfew.

It is not just the caring staff but thousands of medical professionals, data scientists, lab technicians and various officials who are at the forefront of this war. Private citizens have also shown great civic-mindedness and public spirit.

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