

My COVID Experience

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In the name of Allah Subhana wa Ta'la –the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate, I like to say that I feel greatly blessed to share my COVID experience with others. In fact, I have been given a new life. I am very grateful to Almighty Allah SWT for His great mercy on me. I was taken to my local hospital in London on the 25th of April and released on the 17th of September in 2020. I was treated as a case COVID-19. Of my 146 days in the hospital, I was in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for 120 days. It is very rare to have such a long stay in ICU. COVID has three forms: mild, moderate, and severe. I passed through all three forms and turned to have the most severe one. Seven days prior to admission, I developed mild symptoms like a dry cough that changed to fever and shivering in the night. In about 90 percent of cases, the disease subsides without any treatment. In the remaining 10 percent cases, it may turn very severe, need ICU admission, and may cause death.

On 24th April, one day prior to my hospital admission, I didn't feel that much unwell which could warrant my hospital admission. On that day, I drove for 3 hours on a motorway at about 70 miles per hour from my workplace place where I used to work as a consultant in acute medicine. After returning to my residence in London, I have a good sleep that night. On 25th April, in the afternoon, I started feeling weak and unwell; but still, surprisingly, I didn't have any shortness of breathing or any serious symptoms. But COVID sometimes runs silently and harms badly. I felt I must check my oxygen level. I didn't have any oximeter at home; my son bought it from the market. I found my oxygen level at 86 percent; normally it should be 94-98 percent. It was alarming low. I didn't have any doubt that I have COVID. So it was clear to me that I need oxygen and must go to a hospital. My family called an ambulance and within ten minutes it arrived. In the meantime, I send an email to my all contacts informing

them about COVID and asking them to make sincere dua. I have 4 daughters and a son; all of them quickly came to my house. In those days hundreds of people were dying every day; so my COVID was a huge shock for my wife and the children. Their face turned very gloomy with an apprehension that I may not return from the hospital.

The ambulance paramedics found my oxygen saturation quite low and quickly started with oxygen. I was taken to the resuscitation room of the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department of King George Hospital –the nearest hospital from my house. I was still alert, oriented, and conversant. Initially, I was started with a simple mask; after a while, I was started with CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) oxygenation. It was difficult to tolerate the CPAP machine. In the past, I worked as a registrar in respiratory medicine. Now I realise why some patients in the respiratory ward preferred to die instead of taking CPAP machine. How long I was on CPAP, I can't remember. At one point I was told by one of the doctors that I need a ventilator. It was very alarming to me; I got the message that my situation is quite serious. The doctor was asking for my consent. I told him to go ahead with it.

Since I was told that I need a ventilator, it was a tremendous shock for me. I felt I may not survive. I had a dream since my school days. I felt, my dream now stand shattered. I have a firm belief that we the Muslims do not have any scarcity of wealth but have a serious shortage of knowledge. We have scores of people in agriculture, business, industry, army, and other professions. But we need many more people in the field of writing. And it is the Sunnah (tradition) of Allah SWT to start with disseminating knowledge. Knowledge sets the status of humans –both here and in the hereafter. Adam (peace be upon him)'s knowledge -as imparted by Allah SWT made him fit to get sijda (prostration) from the angels. So, it has been my passion to follow the sunnah of Allah SWT. I took my pen as a weapon to fight for Islam. I took the medical profession as a decent survival tool and also as a tool to serve humanity. But my prime objective in life was to work as a servant of Allah SWT –especially in the field of knowledge.

When I was told that I need a ventilator, I thought, the time has come

to return back to my Allah SWT. But I had a deep apprehension that I am leaving this world almost empty-handed. I wrote hundreds of articles in Bengali and English. All those articles are written in the last thirty years to address the problems of the Muslim Ummah and to find out the solution. Although those articles were published in various newspapers, journals, blogs, but I could publish only one book. In order to give long life to my thoughts, I needed to publish them as books. Hence, prior to hospital admission, I started to edit all those articles for final compilation in several books. In my absence, nobody can do it. Since COVID related deaths were mounting in London, I felt a sense of great disappointment. However, I realized that I can only dream; things are not in my hand. So I possessed no other option but to surrender to the design of Allah SWT. I couldn't see my own face; but it must be a very gloomy one.

I don't know when I was put on a ventilator. Since a ventilator can't be fitted while the patient is awake, I needed to be induced with a comma. One day I found my son is sitting beside me. He was smiling. Seeing him, I was also smiling. After my admission to the hospital, it was the first time that I saw anyone of my family member. My son asked me whether I know how long I have been in hospital. I told you, may be one or two days. He told me that I was in a comma for about two and a half months. I was surprised. I even didn't know that I was still in ICU. My son informed me that I was critically unwell. The doctors were struggling very hard to bring my oxygen level to the desired level. I had a tracheostomy.

Later on, I came to know from my family that I was so unwell that even the ICU doctors thought, I am losing the battle. In the middle of the month of Ramadan, I deteriorated so much that the doctors asked my family for an immediate visit for the final departing look. However, by the grace of Allah SWT, I didn't deteriorate further and survived. But after about two weeks, on the day of Eid ul Fitr, my condition worsened for the second time. My family was asked again to rush to the hospital. In that time, my family had sleepless days and nights. All praises to Allah SWT, I survived that critical moment, too. On the following day, my family was informed that my condition has started

improving.

While I was in a comma I didn't know what happened to me. But while I came out of the comma, a new phase of difficulties started. I started to have excessive secretions from my throat, hallucinations, nightmares and bizarre dreams. I had to keep a suction machine in my hands to suck secretion from my throat. My left arm was totally powerless. Most of these are the symptoms of post-COVID syndrome and the -effects of medications.

Since I am a doctor, the consultants, the registrars, the nurses started to tell me their story about the severity of my illness. They told me that it was a miracle that I recovered. And it was also clear that only Almighty Allah SWT could do such a miracle. I saw my CT scan of the chest with my own eyes. There was no doubt that it was really a miracle to survive after such an extensive lesion in the lung. I had a multi-organ failure. I had pneumonia, clots, and fluid in both lungs. I had kidney failure that needed dialysis. I had also heart failure secondary to clot in the lung. My liver function also got deranged. Whereas, I was a reasonably healthy man before this COVID attack. My lungs, heart, kidney and liver were perfectly normal. It is a great blessing of Allah SWT that my organs have recovered.

I was also told that the ICU team observed my birthday and posted the photos in NHS website. I am not aware of anything of that. Later on, I knew that my friends in the UK, in the Middle East, Bangladesh and other countries could see those photos. It looked strange to me; since I didn't celebrate my birthday myself in my whole life.

All my days in the hospital gave me a personal spiritual experience. During my old days in schools, colleges, universities, I hardly got a chance to have an exclusive long-time focus on the ultimate destiny in the hereafter. Such thoughts used to come and go and showed little sustenance. My difficult days in the hospital gave me detachment from the world and more attachment with the thoughts of the hereafter. The death and the days after the death stood so close to me. I was standing on a sharp cliff, needed only a slight push to slip onto the other side of the life – the endless hereafter. My COVID could go

worse at any time. We are so vulnerable. We are living in a sea of invisible killers; but still we are not aware of that. All of our earnings in this life will be useless if we can't transfer those assets to the hereafter. Allah SWT has given us enough potentials; what could be the best option than investing those potentials to please Him. There is no doubt that Allah SWT has given me a new life with new opportunities to enrich my treasure in the hereafter.

It is also true that the issue of life or death is not decided by the doctors, nor on the surface of the earth. It is decided only by Allah SWT in the heaven. No virus or bug can kill a man unless it is sanctioned by Allah SWT. Hence dowa works. It is a powerful tool to seek Allah SWT's help. Almighty Allah SWT listens to dowa and also responds to dowa –as revealed repeatedly in the Holy Qur'an.

By keeping me alive, Allah SWT has given me opportunities to know some unbelieving things. I have never been a highly connected man. But I am deeply moved to know that thousands of people all over the world prayed for my recovery. In many mosques in London, people made collective dowa for me. Some shed tears for me. That happened in Bangladesh, too. There were zoom dowa sessions over the internet. Some people gave sadaqa for my life. I could never imagine that the people whom I didn't meet in my life would do that. It is incredible. I am deeply grateful and thankful to all of them. I understand, they could show such deep empathy towards me only because of their intense Islamic sense of brotherhood. I am sure they will get rewards from Allah SWT for their love for one of His slaves. Such love and fraternity are indeed the great asset of the Muslim Ummah. It also works as a strong source of inspiration for me. 23/11/2020.