

Bini's first video call

“Lockdown” is a new word for all of us. What it means, what it signifies-all of it is new! Covid19 has taught it to us. We are reading about the pandemic everyday in the newspapers or watching it on T.V. It's there on everyone's minds and lips today. Lockdown implies complete stay at home. According to reports, “the World Health Organisation (WHO) said that India's Covid fight could make or break the global war. WHO said that India has a tremendous capacity to deal with the pandemic as it has experience of eradicating small pox and polio.” Reports further say that “while lockdown isn't a technical term used by public health officials, it can refer to anything from mandatory geographical quarantines to non-mandatory recommendations to stay at home, closures of certain kinds of businesses, or bans on events and gatherings.”

Hence, suddenly everything has turned online. Studies, purchases, office work, everything. Life has come to a standstill for some, where for many others, the work load has increased considerably, especially for the police, the doctors and for those who serve essential commodities to us. I will talk about a Doctor uncle of mine, Arup Da. He's a frontline worker and has to stay away from home as he's busy dealing with Covid19 patients in the hospital. He is also staying away from home because he has his aged parents, his wife and his little four year old daughter Bini.

Bini is a delightful child, studying in class 1 in a reputed school. She is the favourite of her teachers and has many friends. She loves chattering away and she has an infectious laughter. She feels proud when her teachers and friends say that her father is doing such a brave work in this time of crisis. She wants to grow up and become a doctor like him. Bini loves playing “Doctor Doctor” with her father. He also takes her to the park, where they run around catching hold of each other, taking turns. They play cricket, throw-ball and even badminton, but mostly they end up laughing a lot. She likes seeing her father helping her mother in the kitchen as well. She watches her father giving medicine to her grandparents every night. So, for her, her father is a Superman!And, she wants to be like him.

Bini's perfectly happy world got shaken up around March when the lockdown was declared and doctors were called on duty. Bini understood that something serious has happened, because she saw her parents having a lot of conversations. It was decided that her father would stay close to the hospital and he would keep in touch with the family every day. Bini's father sat her down and explained the situation to her. Bini looked at him wide-eyed and it was only with passage of time that she realized that she would get to see her father only virtually.

Arup Da makes a video call everyday to see his family and talk to his daughter, whom he so dearly misses. Bini raises her hands whenever he calls, as if asking him to take her on his lap. When she realizes that he can't, she starts crying. Arup Da feels terrible, but his wife reassures both Bini and him that she's there to take care and all will be well. His old parents also reassure him that everyone and everything at home is fine. They express their concern for him and goad him to concentrate on his work and stay well. Life goes on. I come to know from my father that Arup Da is doing alright, but misses his family dearly. I feel horrible for him. I don't know how I would manage if I had to stay apart from my family.

One day, Arup Da comes to know that his daughter is down with fever. He gets terribly worried. He prescribes medicines to his wife over the phone, but what he actually wants to do is rush home and

take care of Bini himself. But the call of duty keeps him apart and the family goes through a very trying time with Bini's ill health. Bini keeps murmuring her father's name even in her sleep and keeps crying. Arup Da too, has a tough time concentrating on his work, with Bini constantly in his thoughts. He kept remembering the times when he had been along with his wife at Bini's bedside whenever she fell ill. He took turns in carrying her on his lap, throughout the nights whenever she fell ill. All these thoughts kept haunting him. Another doctor friend who lived nearby diagnosed Bini with jaundice and prescribed medications for her. Slowly the medicines and the care at home healed Bini and she sprung back to action after almost ten days. Bini realised now that her father is also looking after so many lives, whose health is at stake. She made her first video call to her father. When she saw him, she said, "Baba, I love you." Arup Da was absolutely thrilled to get her video call. He was almost in tears of joy! He felt so blessed that his daughter understood him and his beautiful family supports him whole-heartedly.

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