

VACCINE OR DEATH: TAKE YOUR PICK!

What if the suspicious liquid destroys my cells and converts me into a beast? What if the colorless fluid strangles my nerves? And what if it leaves me hanging on the wall with a Garland? These questions along with several others of these sorts seriously perturbed the minds of millions of people not in the remote past but just a few months ago, just in the wake of my advent to shield humanity from the devastating invasion of the Coronavirus. Such denervating questions went the round day in and day out in a multiplicity of platforms including print media, electronic media, and different social media.

I am Covishield, a version of the COVID vaccine, a shield against the CORONA pandemic. I have clearly remembered the day on which I was taken overseas and was injected into various people. It extremely elated me to be called "Sanjeevni Booti" in the Indian diaspora. My journey starts with the gushing flow in the veins of humans and ends in protecting this most precious species on the earth. I am fully pledged to safeguarding entire humanity from the menace of getting extinct by the dreaded invasion of the CORONA pandemic. But my journey hasn't remained easy or unimpeded. It has been entangled with many tantrums. People whom I wanted to save from the devouring face of death have massively mistaken me and misinterpreted me more often than not. Some apprehended that I'd turn them into zombies and some to ghosts; some said I would send them to asylums and some to hospitals. People hardly believed that my role is not of a killer but a saviour. They could not understand my sole mission of annihilating the devilish entity, COVID 19, my arch enemy.

My foe, a curse to humanity, tried all his ways to rise above me and to defeat my mission by appearing in quick intervals in various guises such as delta variant, black fungus, white fungus, or many other mutants. But I never pulled myself back. Hailing from Pune, a highly sophisticated lab, I undertook surfing in the red sea with the RBCs; I never cared about anything except my opponent. Sometimes I felt like I was alighting in the air and sometimes floating fast on the water, starting from four-legged organisms with two-legged. I fought my battle everywhere and gave my best, no matter, who others joined my platoon with my army. I tried my best to give a ray of hope to survive to the grossly endangered humankind.

One day when I was inside one no man's land with RBCs, WBCs, and plasma on my side, I saw my opponent's sneering smile. Then I rose with invincible energy; I marched with all strength. The war continued for months. I

knew after a 12 to 16-week gap, I'd receive another platoon of my army on my side, but suddenly the jerk for which I was unknown, pushed me away from my sure success, and all this happened because I was sent a squad of different antiviruses. The unconvincing truth is being Covishield, I got the squad of covaxin which not only made me lose my battle but also pushed a person to death bed. Yes, I got defeated, but was that only my fault!!! The small screens which are always in front of a man, misguided people by telling them that I'm incapable of rescuing people, that I'm worthless and my invention is futile!

My bad days didn't end soon. My trials and tribulations continued unabated. Being subjected to the world of mass hysteria, I was made the soft target of every individual. They screamed that I'd make them infertile. Some even added that being an mRNA vaccine, I will alter their DNA. But the truth is, I'm intended to produce proteins and have nothing to do with DNA at all!

Now coming to the rural realms of India, illiteracy, and poverty played the role of catalysts in fanning the rumours. Some assumed that it is the vaccine that makes people fall sick. Following their infection, some superstitious ones knocked on the doors of the temples rather than going to hospitals for remedy. Be it WhatsApp plaque, or the Facebook pages, unfounded arguments pervaded their platforms and led to serious misgivings of scientific arguments. Hearsay thus ruled supreme in the rural hinterland.

So much so, a section of people raised their voices against my quick advent and suspected my efficacy. Some alleged me to be fake. Even though I came into being in a record short period, I had been made to go through the same rigorous Food and Drug Administration processes as other vaccines. The process of my development had met all the safety measures. No steps whatsoever were skipped. But this truth could not counter mass hysteria. Many assumed my induction into their bodies would be devastating. They wrongly underlined my relationship with types of RBCs. They said certain blood types have less severe covid 19 infections. Therefore, getting a vaccine isn't necessary. They apprehended it can harm some other blood groups. As a matter of fact, apprehensions that I can make one suffer from a severe allergic reaction are baseless and false. My shoutout remained far from the crowd.

People juxtaposed my position in various forms. Like in the case of all other things, I had had my bad days. Eventually, my bad days came to an end. Some scientific-minded beings such as doctors, scientists,

administrative officers, and socialists came to my rescue. They vigorously initiated awareness drives. In the meantime, many other competing as well as capable friends in the name of NOVAVAX, SPUTNIK V, and COVOVAX are configured on the arena. My story of trials and tribunals is now part of history. In fact, for a pretty long time, I remained the burning topic in hand-tops, laptops, and big screens. This time social media did a commendable job with the help of the government and some welfare organizations. But the real trail of my journey was awaited by a bang of surprises.

In a world with 689 million people under the poverty line, can I be accessible to one and all? Can those teeming millions afford my price and procurement? This very question invited much hustle and bustle across the whole world. Even though some of them were working very hard for the noble cause of administering vaccines, they had had hardly any time for getting themselves vaccinated. Some ruthless masters didn't give them a holiday for the purpose. And some didn't have good hospitals, and for some, it was out of reach from every dimension. Then the WHO and several governmental organizations came to my rescue. They explored various means to make me available to people at a minimal price. Some countries like India made me available to their citizens even free of cost. This giant step drastically changed the pandemic scenario of the world. Such commendable steps made my struggle against the pandemic worthy and effective. It eventually enabled me to save humanity.

After a prolonged spell of stalemate, that day finally came when schools, colleges, and offices opened of course, with some limited restrictions. I witnessed the much-awaited brimming smiles on the erstwhile gloomy faces which remained long blindfolded in the narrow chambers of their houses during the reign of terror of the pandemic. The child who could never see a swing, nor the crowd since his nativity, experienced some awe and wonder in getting exposed to such things in public places.

The story of my valour doesn't stop here. At the G7 summit, the “The One Earth, One Health” slogan enervated me with renewed mirth and vigour to move faster on the path of my success. All our projected dreams started to come true. The task of demolishing the roots of the corona appeared no longer impossible. This reiterates the significance of the saying, “Unity is strength.” The whole world came forward to render defunct the grip of the coronavirus. This is the maverick odyssey of my mission and might which I wanted as well as waited to articulate to the whole world.

Be it Bolsonaro or a granny with weathered skin, I never counted anyone untouchable to me. Never have I discriminated in my services to mankind. The good thing is a few cases are reported these days. Yet nations shouldn't be complacent and refrain from undertaking drives for improving immunity among citizens or getting them vaccinated. The hard truth is to be realized that corona will take some more years to get completely eradicated. But in the meantime, it can be avoided by following strict precautionary measures and following such imperative practices as maintaining social distancing, sanitizing one's hands frequently, etc. it is well said, prevention is always better than cure. We should never get disheartened to take note of the high death rate. It is important to take note of the fact that the number of cured people is much higher than the number of people dying. Mushrooming of hospitals that are working round the clock to fight the pandemic and save the life of the infected have infused the world with new spirit and hope. It is true, what is Lotted can't be Blotted. But the human effort and fighting spirit have always remained indefatigable. The choice always rests in your hands whether to choose a vaccine over death or vice versa. Coming to the question of risk, it is a fact, many risk-takers have failed in their ventures in the past. The sailors have died and space shuttles have exploded killing all on board. But humans have never moved away from taking some calculated risks. The discoveries and gains that have come up from human ventures are not little either. Our undertakings are stepping stones to our healthy and bright future. Let us not step down from making it happen.

This is Covishield signing off!