

APPRECIATING THE UNSUNG HEROES

Stay home Stay safe. COVID-19 is outside. It has a big ego. It would not come to your house unless you bring it home. So, no handshakes or hugs, wear masks, keep physical distance, avoid social meet ups, drink lots of water, take steam, do gargles, do not touch your face, mouth and nose, and wash your hands for twenty seconds and repeat it after every four hours or whenever there is a need.

Everyone among us has heard these statements in the last one and a half month, repeatedly. We must follow these guidelines. Why are we doing this? To protect ourselves and others. If we follow it religiously, we are all heroes who have some contribution in this battle against COVID-19.

The motivation of this piece is to pay tribute to the contribution of our heroes especially the unsung heroes. The ones who perform their duties and do not get much recognition.

Starting from doctors and nurses to the cleaning staff at hospitals, those working at helpline 1166 to lab technicians and drivers transporting the COVID-19 patients, all are heroes. They are at the front line dealing with COVID-19 positive cases. A few among them have the proper gear now but none had it initially.

Teachers imparting education online and spreading awareness on prevention, researchers doing research related to COVID-19 to develop vaccine, examining behaviour of patients, looking at the socioeconomic impact of the outbreak, and the IT workers trying to develop apps to update nation on the number of cases and how to prevent from the pandemic- all are heroes.

Street cleaners, garbage collectors who are making sure that the roads and streets remain clean. Vegetable and fruit vendors, grocery shopkeepers, drug store worker/owners who are providing everyone daily essential items- all are heroes in their own right.

The list does not end here. Let us have a look at some more heroes.

Government employees and administrators, ensuring the seamless continuity of all basic services including provision of clean water, developing action plans every week while looking at the new developments domestically and internationally. Government employees who are working 24/7 with the international bureaucracy for provision of testing kits and personal protective equipment, bringing back our people stranded overseas, and providing ration and other necessities to those in need.

District administration and law enforcement agencies, especially the police who have the hardest responsibilities, i.e., to control Pakistanis not to roam around outside or gather at one place. Precisely, they are the ones who have the most difficult job in saving lives of all the people.

Every single individual whether they are part of some civil society organisation or otherwise are contributing in their own way. Celebrities, like the cricketing star Shahid Afridi, are involved in giving ration to the people. EDHI, Saylani, Akhuwat and other welfare organisations are among those providing food and other essential items at the doorsteps of the needy people. Besides these known celebrities and welfare organisations, there are many who are collecting money, making ration bags and providing these to the needy households. Asim Jofa and other designers are stitching home grown personal protective equipment.

Tailors are stitching masks, mothers are taking care of their families at home, offices are working online, siblings are taking care of each other, and so many of the business owners are retaining their employees and giving them salaries.

All of them are unsung heroes contributing in one way or the other in this battle against COVID-19. Few contributions will get recognition at the larger level, some may not even be identified as 'contribution'. Nevertheless, everyone has taken part in this battle in their own way and capacity.

Irrespective of who says what, these unsung heroes have made a significant contribution because of their sense of responsibility, compassion and specific expertise. Whoever is making such a contribution is a hero, in cases an unsung one, and deserves our unending gratitude.