WHY NOT ME? by Sudha Bhuchar, written for the *Covid and Me – Vaccine Monologues* Hindi/Urdhu version (Theatre of Debate/NIHR/Leeds University).

Meri Saheli **Beryl** bilkul farishta hai.

Pehle wo NHS staff ko khana bantti thi (unhe meri daal bahut pasand ayee), aur ab wo ladies se mask silwa rahi hai, NHS ki charity ke liye . Mein ne apne bete Rohan se kaha:

'Loft se meri Singer machine nikal lao. NHS ne tumhare Daddy aur mujhe bachaya tha . Ab meri baari hai unki madad karne ki.

Log bache kuche kapre market say donate karte hain. Yeh African' Kitenge" wala maine apne liye rakh lia – Isse un Kurton ki yaad aati hai, jo hum Uganda mein pehna karte the. Aur yeh titli wala mask, mujhe sab se zyada pasand hai . Mein ne apne Husband ko kaha:

"Zara bahar aa kar dekho- 'painted ladies' kaise phoolon ke beech naach rahin hain. Bahut door se safar karke aayin hain, humare jaise. Asia say leke, Afreeka ki sehraon ko par karke, yahan udh ke pahunchi hain.'

Unhe titliyon mein koi dilchaspi nahin .

Unki aankhen sara waqt tv screen pay jami rahti hain. 'Breaking news'.

Ab unhe Corona ki Second wave ka fikar hai, jo mulk mein phail rahi hai . Maine kaha:

"Shukr hai hum pehli wave mein bacch gaye. Beryl to kehti hai ki ab humain zindagi jeeni chahiye- 'Live a little'

"Agar wo kahe pahaar se chhlang laga do , tum vo bhi karne ko tayaar ho kya?"

(react)

Beryl ka beta 'fresher' hai. University main. Pehle hi haftay pahunch kar lockdown mein phas gaya. Takriban poore uske Hall of residence mein students ka covid test, positive nikla. Voh to bilkul pareshaan nahin hui. Kehne lagi:

' Youth is on their side'

Beryl aur uska husband zinda dil hain- "date" nights manaate hain. Uska shohar lamb couscous banata hai aur dono mian biwi baithkar box sets dekhte hain.

Vo plan bana rahe hain, 'wild swimming' jaane ki, aur pura Great wall of China paidal chal chuke hain, baghair London ko chhode.

Usne mujhe apne **fit bit** pe dikhaya tha.

Rohan kehta hai hai Angraizon ko sahi tarah se jeena aata hai. Ki unka '**attitude'** accha hai. Aapne logon jaise nahin, jinke pass '**Asian fear of living' thing'** hai.

Main jeene say nahin darti, lekin mere Jeevan saathi maut se darte hain.

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Wo to razai ke ander sofe pe pade rehte hain. Hamesha thake hue hote hain, aur seedian (stairs) charh ke, bathroom jaane se hi, unki saans charh jaati hai .

Hamari GP, (Gujrati hain Uganda se), vo kehti hain inko **'long covid'** ho sakta hai. Aur inki doosri bhi to kitni mushkalain hain- Diabetes, Heart, Blood pressure.

Hum Dono ko Virus ek saath hi hua tha magar kyonki main **Principal Trial** pe register thi, Rohan ka khayal hai ki 'mum, you lucked out'. Mere symptoms ek aam si flu waale the, aur unhonne mujhay kuch nayi (new) dawaiyaan deen. Mein teen hafte mein theek ho gai .

Maine socha, hum daudh (race) jeet gaye hai.

Lekin wo tu sirf pehla round nikla.

Rohan ghar baithkar kaam kar ke, aur uper reh ke, tung aa chuka hai . Wo kehta hai ke wo apne phone par, duo lingo pe, French seekh raha hai . Wo Therese ko 'Diamond League' mein 'Smash' karna chahta hai.

Magar mujhe 'ping' 'ping' ki awaaz nahin sunai di to pata laga ki vo chupke say flat dhoond raha hai.

Jab main zoom par apna Surya namaskar kar rahi thi, to uske khus phus ki aavaz aa rahi thi - Estate agent ke saath baat kar raha tha.

Mein subah teen baje tak mask seeti hun, aur akele Rohan ke ipad pe, **apne** '**box sets'** dekhi houn. Purane dramay, jaise - 'Kyunke saas bhi kabhi bahu thi.'

Ab Saas banke wo bete ki biwi par raj karna chahti hai . Mein ne Rohan se kaha:

"Mein tujhe koi acchi Desi ladki se mila sakti hun, aur tu zoom par date kar sakta hai'

"I don't want to date on zoom mum. And she might not be Desi'

"Hamen gori ladki pe aitraz nahin. Lekin vaccine ko to aanay de na, phir humara aashirwaad leke chale jaana, azaadi chahiye to'

Main jaanti houn ke main ek narm Saas houngi. Wo kahta hai:

'**The goal post keeps changing mum. Even with the breakthrough they still need to test other vaccines.**
'I'll never be 23 again and I'll have wasted my youth in your attic!'

' Humne tujhe bandhkar kaidi to nahin rakha!'

Gabriel ne Rohan ko Bournemouth bulaya. Kutch doston ne Air b n b ka intizam kiya tha. Gabriel 'Eco warrior' hai. Beach se auron ka kachra uthata hai.

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“Beta chale jao kucch dino ke liye- samundar ki hawa kha kar aana!’

“ Mum they don’t think Covid is serious. ’

Vo sochte hain Sarkar naujawano ki azaadi rokna chahti hai. Ya, badi badi Pharma companiyan apni daulat badhana chahti hain. Wo sochte hain ki agar sab ko infection ho gayi to **‘Herd Immunity’** ho jaayegi.

“Apne Daddy ka ek Video lo aur Instagram par post karo. Dikha do unhe ke ye kaise ‘serious’ nahin hai!’

Log vo din bhool gaye hain jab har waqt khabron pe kitne log ventilators pe dikhaaya karte the. Itni ziada deaths huin, aur humare aapne kitne log bhi to mare hain.

**

Wo nahin gaya. Accha ladka hai . Abhi bhi hamari raksha ke baaare mein sochta hai.

Kehta hai ki hum mein antibodies toh hain, lekin hum ye yaqeen se nahin keh sakte, ki hum dobara virus ka shikar nahin honge.

Aur uske Daddy ki kitni co-morbidities bhi to hain.

Rohan ne kaha ke vo vaccine ke liye Register karne laga hai.

‘Asians aren’t volunteering, and they need that data’.

Kehta hai ki hum phanse (stuck) rahenge, jab tak Vaccine na ho, jo sab ke liye kaam kare, aur aasaani se mil jaaye.

Maine kaha, **‘jinke zyaada bachche hain, unhein volunteer karne do. Toone kyon haath uthaaya - tu meri eklauti aulaad hai’**

Kehta hai, ‘**Why not me? You went on a trail.’**

“ Haan, magar mein pehle se beemar thi, isliye jaise tu kehta ha, ‘No Brainer’ tha.

‘Mum we’re over-represented in illness and under-represented in research. They want people of all ages. Even with pre-conditions’.

Vo hai bhi to Taurus, na? Horoscope kehta hai ke wo ziddi hai, aur chhupa Rustom! Dheere chalne vala, jiska dimaag phat a phat chalta hai!

Haan. ‘**Why not him?’**

Ab usko pehli dose denge . Phir usse apne phone par **app** download karna hoga.

Har thode din ke baad, data bharna hoga. Chaubees ghante ki helpline bhi hai, aur vo ek saal tak monitor karenge.

Vo kehta hai ki vo kisi bhi waqt apna faisla badal sakta hai.

Mein ne uss se poocha:

"Wo kaise sochte hain ki humare desi log, jo angrezi nahin samajh sakte, voh kaise volunteer karenge?'

'Exactly mum. Research needs to shake it up and include them'

Jaise hamara Desi Aam bechne vala. Usne Whatsapp group mein likha, ki har ek ko zabardasti teeka lagaya jayega, vaccine ka, aur subko Corona ho jayega.

' Tell him it's not a live vaccine mum and won't be mandated'

Vah bhai, Itne badhe lafz jaanta hai! Hum kya javab dein!

'And don't let dad eat too many mangos when I'm gone!'

……..

Rohan ko bahut badhiya flat mil gaya. Dariya ke saamne. Humain kehta hai ki kucch bhi karne say pehle voh **'risk/benefit'** ratio dekhega. Maine thore Tupperware mein daal bhar di, freeze kar sakta hai.

Nahin to vo mehenga mehenga **Pasta** pakayga. Voh **Ottolenghi.**

Usne humare liye **'fit bits'** khareede hain.

'You and dad have to count your steps!'

Jab main javaan thi, main Mount Kilimanjaro sur karna chahti thi.