**Lockdown Anxiety Diaries. Episode 2**

My mother is a very calm person. In any situation her sense of calmness has always been a wonder to me. So when I answered her call finally after a few times, she asked me if I was ok. I said I am fine. The country has just gone under complete lockdown. She said, yes it’s necessary. Since there’s no cure to this virus, there’s nothing much we can do. Her voice had a strong sense of determination, a sense of security and just listening to her, my panic inside had started subsiding a bit. I said Mom, what will happen ? She answered calmly, trust in God. Her faith was always unaltered. No matter the circumstances. She is a very religious person. So coming back to the lockdown announcement, she was going on and on about the list of things that I should be careful for. I listened calmly and said don’t worry, I will be alright. On that note, the call ended. I sat in my beanbag for a while, feeling completely numb. All my senses went blank for a while and suddenly a gush of wind woke me up from that state of numbness.

I tried to reason with myself for a while, trying to calm my anxiety down. My hands were shaking suddenly and my heart beat was on a rise. I thought I will take a stroll in my living room to my bedroom and to my balcony. I walked round and round the house, but nothing was helping. In that state of anxiousness, nervousness, nothing helps for a little while. You just have to accept it and let it pass. I sat again in my balcony, that is the only place where I can see the world around me, where I can see the skies, the stars, hear the noise of the people around and that gives me a bit of relief. That is my solace. Hearing people around brings me peace. It is strange how that fear of loneliness suddenly hits you and makes you feel like you are the only person left in the whole world.

After drinking a glass of water, I went to my kitchen and started making a list of groceries that I would need. The next morning I will go and get it all. I made a mental note of that. I just needed to divert my mind from all the thoughts that were floating in my head, to doing something useful. Something meaningful and I was fine. The anxiety attack finally subsided. I was myself again. I kept saying to myself, Mansi, you are going to be fine. You aren’t alone. An entire population of 1.3 billion people is under a lockdown. You will be fine. Finally, you can read, catch up on all the TV series you always wanted to watch and do all the things according to your own body clock and not according to the wall clock. And thinking of the freedom, helped me. It made me smile.

I slept peacefully. The night of the lockdown announcement, was one hell of a night. Although I slept peacefully, with good thoughts in my head, I woke up with a massive headache the following morning at 7am. I kept tossing and turning after that, as I thought I will wake up at 9am and call my office. See what needs to be done. What was the point of waking up so early? That was my first thought. Finally giving in to the roar of my stomach, I got up at 8.30am and did my morning chores, made a nice huge breakfast and sat with my laptop.

I rang my office and that’s where the second anxiety attack hit me. My manager said the company will be closed completely, and we don’t know when it will resume operation, as our stake holders have put the funds on hold. So we might not be able to pay you either. It is up to you if you want to look for another job, you can. I almost wanted to scream. You want me to do job hunting in middle of a lockdown? Is it some kind of a joke? I mean are you serious? And you are denying me pay as well? What just happened? I calmly listened to everything then tried reasoning with my manager that I can still work from home. I am working on Course Development and it can be done from home. But he said everything is shut down and we aren’t monitoring any work from home so it’s not possible. Moreover we don’t know if we are going to pay you or not, so there’s no point now discussing this until the lockdown opens and we’ll see what happens then. I was shocked, frightened, angry and felt betrayed. That how can they just leave me in lurch like that ? But that was that. That is what happens when you decide to work for someone else. You have to deal with the consequences.

I put my phone down. Closed my laptop. Cried my heart out. Because it wasn’t just the physical health I had to worry about. It was the mental health too. It was about my career too. It was about the uncertainty of my future too. All of it was too much to grasp at a time. Too much to take in. Firstly, after my crying spell was over, I checked my bank balance, that do I have enough to survive on? Will I be ok? And thankfully I had a bit of saving so I knew I was going to be ok for a little while. Next thing I knew I had to do job hunting soon. But who will hire anyone now? A huge economic crisis was looming and I don’t know why but suddenly I felt very very angry. About everything. Happening everywhere in the world.

I turned on the world news and thought to distract myself with the actual facts happening around. Maybe it wasn’t as bad as I was thinking in my head. Maybe there was still hope. Maybe I was making a mountain out of a molehill. NYC was the epicenter in US. Spain recorded so many new cases and deaths. Italy was slowly turning into a graveyard. France and Germany reported all these new cases. The world was slowly going into a lockdown. Death toll in Spain surpasses China. Social distancing measures in place. Prince Charles tests Covid-19 positive.

I shut my laptop down and sat numb with fear again. I wasn’t making a mountain of a molehill but the situation was so bad that the Himalayas were being created out of a molehill. Not literally but figuratively. You know what I mean.

I made a sandwich for dinner as my appetite was completely lost. I wasn’t hungry but looking at the clock, it was 10pm and I hadn’t eating anything in a long while, I thought better to make something. As I was slicing my bread, I thought, so the flights, trains, planes, everything is at standstill. India has taken such a huge decision to go into complete lockdown. No other country has done such a thing. The cases in US are multiplying too but they aren’t going into a complete lockdown. I wonder if this is just a precautionary measure or is it the need of the hour situation. We certainly don’t have enough healthcare staff here. The ratio of the staff to population is minimal. I guess it’s a good thing. The economy will be severely impacted though and I wonder what will happen to me. My job is almost gone and they haven’t paid me for last 2 months as well. I wonder if I can sue them. If this was London, the employer wouldn’t have had the courage to do this. I wonder if my decision to move back to India after spending almost 15 years in London was a right one. It will be now exactly 11 months since I moved back. To my country. To my motherland. My love for India has always been such that I haven’t been able to explain it much to anyone. My mind drifted to memories of past and how much I used to miss India while I was away. Slogging into the mundane work culture, just focusing on earning money, looking after my parents and my sister. Younger one. That reminded me to check on her. She lives in California, and US news weren’t any good. So I called her, but as usual, she never answers the call. So I left a message saying I was worried about them – my sister and her husband, and hoping they are fine and asked to call me back. In a strict voice. She is a brat. That little one.

I ate my sandwich and started browsing the social media handles. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram all one after another and all the news everywhere just depressed me more than before. Somehow, there was no positive message about anything and everything was just about survival. How to survive this sudden crisis that was just dumped upon humanity and how to come out of it unaltered.

It was 3am and there was no sleep at all in my eyes. The random thoughts of fear hit me all night and I don’t know what was the time when I finally gave in to the sweet release and left the worries behind just for a while. A little while.

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