

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

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We have so many things to be grateful to God for. We have succeeded, to a large extent, to have come out of the virus Covid-19, for example, and moved along. We must thank our stars that we have come out of the two or possibly three waves of Covid-19 which have brought the whole world to a grinding halt, as it were. The ubiquitous pandemic infected over 200 million people across 220 countries the world over leaving over 4 million and a quarter dead (India alone accounting for shy of 32 million cases with over 4.25 lakh fatalities). Millions of parents lost their children, siblings, spouses, relatives, acquaintances, and friends. In India alone, the deadly disease left more than 30,000 children orphaned or abandoned. This figure does not include all those cases which went unreported or underreported. Count your blessing that you are out of danger looming over us like the Damocles' sword.

We also must thank heavens for having 'successfully' scraped through seemingly insurmountable ordeals: looking for an ambulance to shift a friend or colleague to a healthcare facility; arranging a hospital bed for our dear ones; looking for an oxygen cylinder or oxygen concentrator for a close one gasping for breath; scouting for a purportedly life-saving drug(s) for a relative staring at an imminent death; running around haplessly for a slot in a crematorium or a patch of land anywhere under the sun to give our near and dear one a decent burial. We have seen blood-cuddling images or spine-chilling videos or read innumerable nerve-wrecking tales of ordeals and upheavals. We have broken free from the constant dismay and angst we had been undergoing as somebody in our home or the neighbourhood tested positive; we have also come out of the bad dream of disdain of being in isolation or quarantine; we have withstood the torment of waiting for the body at the morgue or in an ambulance. Count your blessing for you could save some one from the cruel jaws of death by rendering timely assistance, or at least lend a shoulder to somebody, or possibly stand by somebody at their tortuous moment!

We must also be grateful to God for we have not lost the job or the pay at a time when millions of people lost their jobs and means of livelihood elsewhere. An estimated 120 million people lost their jobs due to the pandemic, but we have survived the axe. This figure again does not include small time businessmen and women, those in unorganised sectors, and myriad of other jobs providing people with

some sort of respite or means of livelihood. Covid-19 is just one of the reasons for the large-scale job loss but the lockdowns, shutdowns, closure of firms, offices, enterprises, and business establishments and the regimen of Covid-appropriate behaviour etc. to a large extent are responsible to throw many employed and employable people out of employment. Count your blessing that you have your jobs intact so that you can manage two square meals a day for your family and feed some hungry mouths!

We have one more reason to thank heavens for keeping us sane and safe to be of some use to others. Millions of people the world over had to endure harrowing experiences either directly because of the pandemic or indirectly, for example, post-Covid-19 complications, suicides, murder, stress and fatigue etc. We are lucky we are physically and mentally sound so that we can attend to others' woe, stand by our fellow men and women in time of their need, offer some help in whatever way we can, or empathise with those who need. Count your blessing for you are physically healthy and mentally sound!

We must also thank God for the resilience that the humans in general have shown. Even after being a witness to a never-before devastating pandemic that brought the entire world to its knees, we have proved nothing can stop man: be it following covid-appropriate behaviours, or helping one another in whatever way possible, or going in for mass vaccination at an incredible level or bouncing back with renewed vigour. Barring a few covididiots, most of us are following the covid protocols; people have extended hands of help, both at the individual level and at the community level, in every possible way; in the biggest vaccination campaign in history, we have administered over 4.2 billion doses in 180 countries (India alone accounting for 485 million doses with an ambitious plan to inoculate the entire population by the end of the year); we have really come back to normalcy after fighting the unprecedented disease. Count your blessing that you have got either partially or fully vaccinated with whichever vaccine came your way and thus insulated! We have scores of things to be grateful to our stars for.