

**jugular vein**

## **Sixth sense**

### **The virus can make us lose touch with smell and taste, and other things as well**

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Two of the early symptoms of catching the wretched coronavirus are a loss of two of the five senses that we are credited to possess: the sense of smell, and that of taste, known in the medical fraternity by their official names which, respectively, are Anosmia and Ageusia.

Not being medically qualified I didn't know Messrs Anosmia and Ageusia from Delly Belly and Tennis Elbow Pvt Ltd. But when I woke up one morning and found I couldn't savour the fragrance of my first coffee of the day, nor could I taste it, I knew I had the bug.

Our sense of taste – why we prefer basmati, say, to any other rice – is largely dependent on our sense of smell.

If you've got a blocked nose as a result of a cold, you'll find that because you can't properly smell what you're eating and drinking, their taste diminishes as well.

The virus doesn't play up with just these two interlinked senses, but could in the long run affect our other senses as well. Constant admonition not to come into physical contact with any external thing – door handle, elevator button – or anybody – no handshake, only socially distanced namaste – has sharply reined in our sense of touch. No more, at least for a while to come, the cool, ungloved caress of the glossy pages of a shared book, the silken slide of cards in a game of bridge, the wonderful warmth of the hug of a loved one.

Another sense is sight. The virus doesn't make us lose our sight, but merely changes it in an odd way, so that instead of seeing people as

people, we see them as ‘case loads’, or ‘hospital beds’, or ‘700 MT O<sub>2</sub>’.

Then there’s the sense of sound, which the virus distorts. Certain sounds – like voices begging for Covid help of any form – get shushed for disturbing the peace. And other sounds – like Baath that comes from the Mann – get amplified to crescendo pitch.

That takes care of our five physical senses. There’s also a sixth sense which can be adversely affected by the virus and all the misinformation about it doing the rounds. That sixth sense is generally called common sense.

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