

Jigar Says It All

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ABSTRACT

The liver is an important organ of the body or the liver as a metaphor. From literature to Bollywood, the liver has an important place in everybody's life. A humorous take on an organ of vital importance.

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During my recent interaction with a final-year MBBS student, I was quite surprised that he didn't know the functions of the liver. As an MBBS student, we have all diligently studied and crammed up the various functions of the liver. I chided him on his rather callous attitude towards studies and emphasized the importance of the liver.

The importance of the liver is now even recognized by the National Medical Council, which has introduced a DM course in hepatology. My sympathies with the gastroenterologists who would find their domain of expertise shrinking day by day.

Working in a private medical college can be quite upsetting at times. So, it was one of those instances where I found myself being discriminated against in spite of putting in long hours. To my utter dismay, I was being replaced by someone who was less qualified than me. It was in such a state of mind I barged into the Chief's chamber and vented my spleen at him. I told him, "Do you think you can replace me with someone who is inferior to me in all aspects? What do you think I am? A chopped liver." The boss was quite flabbergasted as he didn't understand from where the spleen and liver came in; after all, he thought the abdomen was the domain of the surgeon. It took him days to understand that my rant was a Jewish proverb meaning to be trivial or unimportant. See, the liver finds its way into the dictionary of idioms and phrases. The Glisson capsule has stretched beyond its domain into the literary world.

The other day I scolded my younger daughter as I found her usage of English wasn't upto the mark, and I often found her using English less and less as the days progressed. I advised her to speak in English often, as it would help her later in life. She took my advice quite seriously when she told me that her classmate's liver had come for consultation. I was quite surprised when I found jigar in my outpatient department. My sweetie had shown her prowess in translation, and I could just smile at her ingenuity.

In Hindi, the liver is known as jigar, and quite a few of my Gujarati friends have taken this liver issue seriously and have named their jigar ka tukdas as jigar, giving an indication to the world as to how much they love them.

In colloquial Hindi, jigar means courage. The language is replete with idioms like jigar hain to maidan mai aa jaa, jigar hatheli par rakh ke aa, etc. Now the liver is associated with courage. See how languages change perception. In our discourse on the liver, can

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Bollywood be left behind? Absolutely not. So many have come from jigar to jigarwala; we have them all. The lyricists have also been equal to the task by even penning down a peppy single titled jiga. Believe me, if there were a Nobel for imagination, these guys from Bollywood would win it, hands down.

As a pediatrician, I often get mothers who are themselves great hepatologists. They would bring in a happy, active, and lean child for consultation quite often. Before I could reach any diagnosis, they would just blurt out, he has a weak liver. On further probing as to how she has reached the diagnosis, which even Sherlock Holmes would be proud of, I get a reply, "Doctor, he eats well, but he is not gaining weight, so I thought his liver is weak." How I wish it was true for me also eating well without any worries of adding pounds to my ever-growing waistline. Life couldn't be crueler, could it be...

Coming back to the mother and her diagnosis, I take pains to explain that it has nothing to do with the liver. My explanation has worked the mother yields a sigh of relief; I am thrilled at my convincing power. Alas! It is a mithya! The mother brings out a yellow bottle from her bag. You guessed it right, Liv 52 it is, the most commonly prescribed drug for liver ailments in the country. I can do nothing but put out a wry smile. The rhetoric wins, and science gets defeated.

My liver has done a fantastic job and has easily digested the sumptuous meal of daal, bhati, and churma; the stomach has sent its signal, and it's time to put the liver to work again.

Meanwhile, if you enjoyed this chat on the liver, please keep me as close to you as your jiger.