



Lessons from the Corona Moment of Humanity

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The globe has stopped for a virus. It sounds crazy but it is real. While we are in lockdown and practicing social distancing to fight COVID-19, it is also a time to think and reflect. Distanciation is special to human. We can stand out of the stream of life and still look at it. We can mark a distance without being distant to life. Distanciation is our ability to reflect. But we cannot stay in the cave of our distanciations. We have to return back and face the immanence of life. We transcend life only to return with direction and vigour. The corona moment of humanity that we are facing is one such important time of distanciation. It challenges us to reflect and face life with serenity, compassion, and courage. Let begin this reflection with the basics. Distanciation takes us temporarily apart from the world. We transcend the hustle and bustle of life and look at it with

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critical eyes. Unfortunately, transcendental mode of thinking is mostly linear and hierarchical and we begin to believe that we are completely apart from the world. The corona moment of humanity is driving us back into the stream of life. It is teaching us that we are not entirely different. We are worldly and bodily and as such are vulnerable as any living organism.

Our Bodily Life and Distanciation

Let's delve on this levelling down of humanity brought about forcefully by the prevailing corona moment. It challenges us to adopt an immanent mode of thinking. Immanent mode of thinking is mostly non-hierarchical and non-linear and open possibilities in all directions. It teaches us that we part of the world that we falsely think is apart from us. The world is not really apart from us. Immanent mode of thing can assist us to understand our immersion into the world. Like a fish that is in the ocean but may not know the ocean as one fable tells us, we too forget that we are immersed in a world. We are beings-in-the-world and not out of it. This is like the eyes that enable us to see the world but we cannot see our own eyes seeing the world. Indeed, there is no line that separates us and the world. But we cannot live without this marking of distance. We need it for survival. There is a reversal of this in the corona moment. We are firmly reminded that we cannot survive outside our world.

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Our body plays a great role in shaping our experience of the world. We can see all bodies under a background but we cannot see our own body. Human experience of the world is carnal. We know the world through our body. We are present to the world through our body. The presence of our body is paradoxical in nature. We experience our body as the most intimate, inescapable, and abiding presence in our lives. But it is essentially characterized by absence. This means our body that essentially assists us to produce or make sense of the experience of our world stays furthest from our

awareness in this entire experience of knowing the world. It is indeed strange that body with which we live and relate to others and the world remains a stranger to us



while it overcomes our estrangement to the world. We relate to the world with a body that is profoundly marked by a corporal absence. In several ways, our carnally produced knowledge of the world is decorporealized. The invisibility of the eyes into its own vision illustrates this fact forcefully. The world is known or thought to be where we are not. This conviction guides our domination of the world. But is the world away from where we are? We are immersed in the world but are not mindfully aware of it. The corona moment by highlighting the vulnerability and fragility of our bodies is bringing us back to our bodily life.

The objectification of the world is possible and is sustained by distanciation that stands between our bodies and the world. It is only through an internal negation of body that we can come to know the world. It is the ecstatic nature of humanity that lets the body become absent to the world and lets us know the world. Perhaps, this gap that we experience in this process has paved a way for the construction of a disembodied lifestyle that is amplified by our technology. It is important, therefore, to listen to our bodies and respect its message. All bodies speak. They have a message for us. The corona moment brings this message loud and clear. We can be really engrossed in the daily routines doing several things but can forget the body that is enabling us to do those things. Maybe we have to listen to the

signals and the cries that our body and that of our loved ones are emitting and find adequate responses

Other Lessons

There are other lessons that we can learn from this corona moment in silence and intense attention. It has truly levelled down humanity. The global lockdown has open possibilities for animals and birds to reclaim their rightful spaces. In the silence that has come as a consequence of lockdown, we can now hear the chirping of the birds, dance of the leaves and flow of the river. Human activity seems to have drowned every other voice on this planet earth. Maybe the corona moment of humanity might arouse eco-concern in us. But there is another important lesson in this levelling of humanity. The dangerous coronavirus does not know all the distinction and divisions that humans have introduced among themselves. The divisive politics, casteism, racism, and marginalization of all forms is seemingly crumbling under the attack of this minute virus. Humanity today is left with a simple option. To save itself it has to save the poor. If the poor are left in lurk to suffer the onslaught coronavirus without adequate food and medicine, it will be suicidal for the rich and the powerful. Coronavirus is here to change the way we live as humans. It is for us to learn our lessons and bring the required change individually and collectively. I stop here not because there is nothing more to say. Immersive thinking in the mode of immanence is not stand-alone thinking. It is a collective thought that brings us back into the stream of life and offers tremendous possibilities to be humans in the world. This thinking has to go on. But it cannot do it without you.

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More Lessons: Quality Time and Boredom

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from morning to night. Now that we have time on our side and no concern about the deadlines of the jobs to be accomplished, we might be confused with the frightening prospect of doing nothing. But we don't have to feel debilitated. There is a lot that one can do with this new flourish of free time. There was a time when we complained about not having enough time when we felt constraints by the things that we had to do and the time that we had at our disposal. Today things have reversed. We have all the time and fewer things to do. But this new condition that finds ourselves is imposed from outside. It has come in a sudden disruptive mode. That is why it is difficult to accept and we all find it to be a great challenge to stay at home and do little or nothing. While there are several things that we can do creatively to wile our time and boredom, it is time to take on the phenomenon of boredom head-on. We have applied our mind's attention to several things but may have not given sufficient attention to this phenomenon that is all around us. This may be another important lesson that we can learn from the corona moment of humanity. To hold our heads with calm serenity, we have to deal with boredom.

Although no one is dying of boredom, everyone has his/her share of boredom. Boredom is not something that has befallen on us at this time of human distress. It has been there amidst us for a long time. We live in a culture of boredom and at this time we feel it acutely due to this general lock-down. Maybe we have

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an opportunity to consider the philosophy of boredom. Boredom is human and has to be critically studied. Today when we have all the leisure in the world and can enjoy the luxury of relaxation and do nothing, the prospect of having nothing to do is producing boredom. Hence, this corona moment of humanity is an opportunity to reflect on boredom that is eating into our life. We really do not have an exact concept of boredom. It is simply a blank label to everything that fails to hold our interest. It might surprise us to know that the boredom that afflicts us today is a recent human invention. It is a product of over rationalization of our society. We are indeed living in a rationalized society that rations us time for everything. We seem to be living always catching up with time to board a bus, train or flight. Some of us are fighting time to reach our office or an appointment with a doctor, engineer, lawyer, etc. This sense of catching up with or fighting the running time has its benefits. It brings efficiency and productivity to our society. It also has its costs. Boredom is one important price that we pay to live on side of the linear notion of passing time.

The inability to catch up with time is one important triggering factor of boredom. Boredom is complex, it is not just lack of mastery over time that produces it there are other factors too. They have to do with the repetition of something. Routinized repetitions produce familiarity and hence there is no novelty, we have to face boredom. Maybe we are facing this situation for now. There is nothing new. Everything seems to be the same. Time today is running slow. We do not have to catch up with it. We have a desire to escape it. We do not like fixations of any kind. But fixations are never abstract. They are different to different people. Boredom, therefore, is an aesthetic condition. It is a matter of likes and dislikes. One can get bored with the same taste of food. Thus, boredom is dynamic, plural and complex and is felt differently by each of us. Here we may have to consider how the desire to see is the mother of all our desires. All desires are scopic. This means all desire is a desire to see. Even a desire to taste a food item is actually

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a desire to see how it tastes. The desire for sex is also a desire to see how it feels. This is why when we are angry we say ‘I will show you or I will see you.’ This desire to see is complex and operates differently in different people. We face boredom when our desire to see cannot animate or likes and dislikes. This is a time when what we like or even dislike begins to become a source of our boredom.

We are not condemned to boredom. We can do something about it. Boredom being an inner-state of mind which shapes our moods can be dealt with effectively. Awareness of what triggers boredom is one way of overcoming boredom. We also have other ways of reframing our minds. Mostly when we are bored, we feel that we have to kill time. This sense can give us signals that we are heading into a condition of boredom. The corona moment of humanity has brought us to the prospect of having to kill time. When we are trapped in this condition, we are not only bored but we bore others.

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Awareness that we have spoken of can come to our rescue in this situation. Such awareness can ignite an understanding that time is a powerful resource but we do not have to catch up with it or fight it when we feel we lack it or have to kill it when we feel we have it in abundance. A reframed mind then can creatively imagine ways of putting up with the surplus time that we have for enjoyable use. This does not mean that boredom will not come catching back at us. It will come back but we will not be enslaved to it. We have the power over it and can

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transform it into enjoyable moments and live happily. Time is open and not closed. There is novelty and surprise for us to enjoy.

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