

Thank you Corona

Corona and its role in our future life

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Acknowledgement and a Note to Readers

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Thanks to all readers for picking up my book!

*To my family, and people who follow their goals
And takes covid as an opportunity*

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Covid 19 - The Pandemic that changed lives - For better or worse?

Man Proposes, God disposes. Of the many proverbs that abound in the English language, never before has a proverb rung so true and how! The year 2020 had started with a lot of promise for a lot of people in a lot of different ways. Like the year 2000, which sparked off the millennial, people were expecting 2020 to be as different a year as its name. And I am sure that most of you reading this book will agree with me beyond doubt when I say that, though it was not quite what anyone of us expected (or rather imagined in our wildest of dreams) what a year it turned out to be!

As we come closer to eagerly sending off this year like a houseguest who has quite overstayed their welcome, it is time to take a look at how this was a year that changed more than just our way of life. It ended up redefining not just human relationships (with each other and with our own selves) but our entire existence, as we knew it.

Caught in the beginnings of a new year, somewhere amongst the headlines in the newspapers was an unsuspecting headline that mentioned about the first Covid-19 case being detected in the distant city of Wuhan, China. But everyone was so caught up in the revelries of bringing in the New Year that it easily went unnoticed. And those who did read about it, ignored it as being a one-off case that happened in a distant nation and not serious enough to be considered threatening in any form.

But no one, even the craziest ones with their outlandish figments of imagination, could ever have thought that this spiky little pink virus from China would turn our lives around in such an unimaginable manner. Before anyone could get a hang of what was happening, the disease spread like wildfire, spreading its tentacles not just within the country of China but nations across the world. In the days, weeks and months that followed, the scenes that unfolded across the globe felt surreal. It was rather like being caught in the scenario from the pages of a best-selling science thriller book.

In the fast paced world, people suddenly found themselves not just slowing down but coming to a sudden halt. Suddenly everyone was restricted within the four walls of their homes (or wherever they were caught in at that moment). New routines were being established of cleansing and maintaining hygiene. Gone were the days of lipsticks, face masks became the norm of the day. Along with establishing restricted boundaries of how we live our lives, the pandemic forced everyone to sit up, pause (per force) and take a stock of where they stood in terms of their relationships with themselves and with others in their lives. It made them reassess and re-examine the things that they believed were their priorities in life. It made people realise the frailty of human beings as a species and broke the myth that we are unbreakable. It was time when (albeit abetted by human intervention) nature decided to reclaim the world that was rapidly plummeting towards destruction in the name of progress and development.

There has been a lot of discussion and talk about whether the kind of restrictions that were imposed on our lives have been for the better or worse. While we have many who support the cons of the pandemic, if we look at it honestly we can safely say that it has forced us to pause and ponder. It has had a multi-pronged impact on our lives, in terms of relationships, careers etc. It brought out the creativity in each and every human being. Suddenly people found their voices and a way to express them through their cooking challenges, their blogs, their vlogs etc. to mention a few. Social media, which was rapidly gaining notable disrepute was reborn as the source of positivity and expression. It suddenly transformed into what it had been designed to be all along, a place of making your voice heard and bridging the gap between the worlds.

The pandemic served as a wakeup call for many relationships. It was something like erring children being put together in the same room for a long duration without being let out until they resolved their differences. And the lockdown that followed, forced people to analyse and introspect their relationships and what they truly meant to them. People who had grown distant over a period of time due to work or life in general were forced to finally face and sort out the issues that were causing all the problems. People no longer had the excuse to not be in touch with their friends and families. The phrase 'nothing lasts forever' suddenly seemed all too real. Friends and distant relations who had not connected over years were reaching out to each other and connecting over social media.

It also gave a rocket boost to the fitness trend that was growing over the past few years. But the pandemic helped shift the focus from 'getting in shape' to 'getting

healthy'. People no longer had the excuse of lack of time for working out or developing unhealthy eating habits.

I am a firm believer of the old adage that 'Whatever happens, happens for good'. And the current pandemic situation across the world is a testimony of the truth of this. I would like to believe that despite the imposition of a whole lot of restrictions on our lifestyle, Covid-19 has really brought us more good than bad. Lives have been lost, our way to living has been altered, everything from the way we travel to the way we eat has changed in ways we never thought possible. But the fact remains that despite all the things that naysayers say about the current situation, Covid-19 has certainly played a major role in adding more meaning to the 'human' in the term human beings.

REDISCOVERING HEALTH - A COVID FALLOUT

The history of fast food dates way back to the 1860s. It all started with a few shops in Britain selling Fish n Chips. After that, centuries later, the trend continued to grow and soon burgeoned into a booming industry across the world. From being an occasional indulgence, it soon grew to be a way of life. 'Ordering in' gradually replaced home cooked meals and went on to become the new normal. Cooking was reduced to a mere hobby and was left to the likes of Martha Stewarts of the world and professional chefs.

As time passed and consumerism grew, quality quickly lost the battle against the constant race for increased profits. This gradually led to a decline in the quality of the ingredients being used while manufacturing these food items. To increase the shelf value more and more chemical based preservatives were used. To enhance the visual and olfactory appeal of these food items hordes of artificial food colours and synthetic flavours were added. And this entire process was propelled ahead at full steam by the creative and attractive advertisements in the form of TV commercials and hoardings that relentlessly urged everyone to 'indulge your senses.' Mood foods, Soul foods, celebratory foods...food was all labelled and marketed as creatively as possible. Instead of the very basic nature of food, which is to provide nutrition to the body for performing healthy bodily functions, it was glamorized and equated with emotions. So much so that even infant food was not spared.

Like every fall that succeeds a sudden unnatural rise, the world started facing the aftermath of living the 'fast' life. There came a surge in health issues across different ages and nations. After extensive research and analysis most of these illnesses were soon attributed to and identified to be what the experts termed as 'lifestyle disorders'. But did that knowledge really wake people up? Unfortunately, no. What it did do though was to lay the genesis of yet another unhealthy trend. Fad diets. Good health soon came to be equated with looking thin, a concept cemented further by the glitz and glamour of fashion and lifestyle magazines. These further resulted in unhealthy eating habits and sometimes outlandish diets. All these so called quick fixes, glamorised and promoted extensively by the social and print media were eagerly lapped up by the masses. This was akin to trying to put fire out with petrol.

As far as health was concerned, for people across the globe, it had reached a phase where with every passing day everything seemed to be spiralling out of control. Though people started becoming increasingly aware of the dark path that they were all headed down in terms of health, it was still not enough for them to sit up and take notice. Arlen Specter, a renowned American Lawyer, Author and Politician, once commented, "There is nothing more important than our good health - that is our principal capital asset". It eventually took something like Covid - 19, a pandemic of epic proportions, for people to truly realise the truth behind these words and finally take some constructive action that went beyond fad diets and fast food.

Suddenly the lazy Friday evenings (or any other day of the week for that matter) were not spent drinking till dawn with friends or ordering in greasy food

masquerading in the name of Chinese, Indian, Italian or what have you. It was as if overnight everyone was transported to the era of home cooked meals and smoke rising out of warm kitchen hearths. The world saw a dramatic transformation from measuring fat content under skin to measuring the oxygen content in one's body. It suddenly was 'good bye body fat caliper and hello oximeter!' It finally started dawning on everyone the world over as the pandemic grew in magnitude, that there was more to health than just being thin and more to eating habits than junk food.

Another thing that added to this growing awareness was the very nature by which the infection was being transmitted. Over a period of time as the awareness grew about the infection, it became quite clear that the chance of contracting it had quite a lot to do with the immunity level of individuals who are exposed to it. Meaning, the greater the immunity the lesser the chance of you contracting it. This realisation led to a mad scramble for identifying reliable and effective ways of boosting one's immunity. And it also clearly brought to light the impact junk food (as fast food had come to be re-christened over the recent years) has on lowering the body's immunity thus making it vulnerable to infections.

With people being stuck indoors with only restricted movement allowed, trips to the grocery stores too took on a whole new dimension. No longer was unnecessary time being spent strolling along from aisle to aisle and picking up random (and often unnecessary) items. Everyone went back to the age old sensible habit of making a list of items required and picking up only that at the store. This process of sensible elimination was further aided by the allocation of restricted time limits within the stores and the long waiting for your turn.

In the past one year the world has seen a gradual but definite shift in the eating habits of people, across cultures and race. Home cooked food has become the new norm. Whether it was for posting pics on the social media or whether it was for an online trend, home cooked food finally found the place that it deserved in establishing a healthy lifestyle. With the lockdown forcing people to spend an increasing amount of time indoors, people had finally found an activity that worked as a stress-buster, health enhancer and of course filled hungry tummies! During the early days when the initial panic of the pandemic had driven people to hoard up on items of food and daily use, it had resulted in a brief shortage of essential items. The social media was filled with recipes of healthy, home-made meals made from using the available limited resources. It thus revealed why human beings as a species have survived calamities like meteor collision and epidemics.

Yet another positive that happened in the health aspect due to the Covid situation is the emphasis that everyone started laying on becoming and staying fit. The most phenomenal one being (like I mentioned above) the shift from losing weight to gaining health. Earlier where people had numerous excuses ranging from shortage of time to huge distances between gym and home, there now seemed to be no more reasons to hide behind for achieving good health. Fitness was literally brought to their doorsteps with numerous fitness classes (free and otherwise) through the internet. Whether it was power walking, Pilates, Yoga to name a few, everyone found a routine that best suited them. And the best part of this form of fitness revolution was that it was all self-initiated and not imposed. This made it easier for them to follow it through. In addition to all this, while the social media offered you the experience of working out in a group from within the comfort of your

homes, it also eliminated the feeling of being 'self-conscious' while working out amongst people who were fitter than you. If you didn't want people to look at you, all you had to do was switch off your video and carry on with your workout.

Along with a good immune system, maintaining good hygiene and living in sanitised conditions also play a great role in restricting and curbing the spread of the infection. This has led to incorporation of newer habits of maintaining the highest level of sanitisation at all times, whether they be at home or outside. These have in turn led to a marked improvement in the way people now live their lives and keep their homes. The cleaner living conditions not only helped keep Covid away, it also kept them away from a lot of infections and disorders like allergies, seasonal and otherwise.

So, if we look at it in a truly pragmatic manner it will not be untrue to say that the Pandemic really made people take a whole new look at their and their families' health, whether it be in terms of fitness, good eating habits or maintaining the highest level of hygiene. There is a saying that if a person has good health on his side, he will always have hope. And what are we without hope? So while it has run askew the way we knew our lives to be, Covid - 19 has definitely brought about the changes that do give mankind the hope of one day waking up to a Covid-free world on the other side of the pandemic.

Rebirth of social relations and Covid's role in it

Over the last few years there had been a massive boom in the role played by the social media in our lives. Infact, fascination with establishing a presence online had reached the level of fanaticism. At one point it started to feel like everyone around us was spending more time doing activities that will get them maximum social media presence than just living and experiencing their normal lives. Hanging out with friends, picking up a new hobby, travelling, exploring themselves and their lives, things which were once considered to be choices made purely out of personal preferences for reconnecting with self, family and friends had now been reduced to mere photo ops.

This impact of social media is what led to the all-pervasive Selfie mania. From waking up in the morning with bedhead to red noses from the flu, nothing was out of the purview of selfies. Conversations too took on a new avatar, changing from an oral exchange of words to messages typed out on phones. But this transformation didn't just stop there. With the passage of time these typed messages evolved too. From being mere text messages they soon grew to resemble one of those Egyptian tablets discovered in pyramids, with emoticons being used extensively instead of words. And not to mention the birth of a whole new language consisting of acronyms like AFAIR(As far as I remember), EOBD (End of business day)...the list is endless and is growing constantly with new acronyms being added by the minute. But an unfortunate fallout of this was that as the ease of use of technology increased, so did the level of detachment and dislike for real physical interaction.

Add to this a hectic lifestyle where a day was planned as per activities like breakfast, school/ work, soccer practice, hobby classes and grocery runs, to mention a few. Most of these would involve extensive driving around. The calendars on the fridge were filled choc a block and the only goal seemed to be crossing off as many squares as possible by the end of the day. Everyone got so caught up with their lives that they truly and completely forgot what it is like to truly live, treasuring the little moments. Ironically, people did not realise how caught up in a rut they were until they were forced to come face to face with it during the lockdown.

Lockdowns which were put in place due to Covid outbreak successfully achieved the one thing that no spiritual or self-help guru could ever achieve across centuries. It forced people to pause, draw a deep breath and take a new look at the kind of lives they were leading. Suddenly with too much time on hand, many ran out of excuses like time crunch, busy work schedules and were finally able to turn to the hobbies and interests that they had always wanted to pursue. With school and sports classes being cancelled, drives to work being reduced, grocery shopping being done online, with no constant pressure to wake up early, and many a mornings were spent waking up late and spending time together with the family. Even the daily chores like gardening, cooking etc. took on the role of being entertaining when families did them together. People started realising the true joy in the simple things of life. Sometimes it could be something as mundane as sitting together sipping a cup of warm coffee and having an actual, real, face to face conversation.

Parents were able to spend more time with their children while couples were spending more time rediscovering each other over shared meals. Before the virus

locked up the nations, most homes had been reduced to a place where people work like workers in opposite shifts. Sure, they all were working on the same project - of making their family life work. But at no time was everybody working together in the same room. Homes had turned into a place for hurried goodbyes and whispered goodnights.

Now, forced to come together due to the restrictions imposed because of Covid-19, people finally had the time and the opportunity to reflect on their family and their true priorities. Coronavirus at its height, reawakened the common feeling of humanity, inherent yet till recently unexplored in human beings. It is this humanity which brings them together in trying times like these. Even the very act of 'social distancing' turned out to be, paradoxically, a kind of harmony where a collective action was required (and made) to stop the spread of the disease.

But the picture was not all rosy as it seems now almost a year since the advent of Corona. When the Lockdown was imposed, for the first time, most of us were suddenly spending far more time than we are used to with those who share our homes with us. It could be with spouse, with housemates, kids and of course who can forget pets. In the initial days (or months) losing both normal contact (the kind that we used to take for granted) and being pushed into much closer contact was not just stressful, but in various instances it ended up being worrying, frightening or even unbearable at times.

But as more months passed by, the proverbial human resilience came into play as more and more people came to realise the true meaning and significance of

two simple yet powerful words - patience and understanding. And for those who were unfortunate enough to be caught on the wrong end of lockdown imposed togetherness (for instance victims of domestic abuse) genuine help was made available through social media and efforts were actively reach out to those who lost their jobs or close ones to Covid.

American novelist, playwright, short-story writer and screenwriter Cormac McCarthy, might not have realised how close to the truth he was when he once famously remarked, "The things that I loved were very frail. Very fragile. I didn't know that. I thought they were indestructible. They weren't". During the pandemic these were the very thoughts that went through the minds of every single person caught in its wake. The unimaginable had happened. Lives had been changed in a way no one ever thought possible. And yet it had in many ways turned out to be for the best. The recognition of frailty of the human race made each interaction and relation valuable.

The Covid-19 pandemic has definitely reshaped and redefined our personal relationships in ways and means that were truly unexpected. It has forced us to live closer together with some, while it has taken others further apart from us. While lockdown brought families together, implementation of strict social distancing measures have isolated us from our friends and wider social communities.

It has turned out to be a one of its kind social experiment which has had significant effects on our social relationships. These are effects which will redefine

the dynamics of the social relations as they exist today and in the future times to come. The consequences have been both positive as well as negative.

The relationships that we form are but an extension of who we are as a person. So it becomes very pertinent to understand how these extreme circumstances have truly altered them, not just in the short term but in the long term as well. A number of surveys were conducted during the Lockdown to achieve a greater and in-depth understanding of how the relationships were changing. As expected, they have yielded surprising results. Participants recognised this forced confinement as having been one that not only severely tested but transformed personal relationships.

One very interesting observation of these surveys has been the impact of age and gender in managing and maintaining relationships. Women emerged as the predominant communicators who played a major role in maintaining social ties. They naturally took over the role of the caring partner in a family or in friendships where the other person is vulnerable and sensitive. While this is a positive observation, it was also the primary reason why they have also reportedly experienced the maximum stress during the situation.

When it came to men, especially if they were aged forty and above, the findings were almost on the contrary. They considered the lockdown to be a welcome situation where they were able to take a break from the rat race. They felt that this was a time when they could spend more time at home relaxing and enjoying

family time. Evidently, this opposing result is also the reason for some relationships breaking down.

In addition to gender, the stage of life also played a role in determining the shift in nature of relationships. For instance, parents with young children established a greater communicative connection with their parents or other senior members of their family to get mutual support and advice on childcare. On the other hand young adults who did not have any kind of familial responsibility chose to connect more with their friends rather than their parents or relatives.

In the end it can safely be concluded that the surveys have revealed that the Life in Lockdown has (with exceptions) more or less reinforced strong ties like family and close friends. Other social relationships like those with colleagues at work or common friends from recreational activities like gym etc were sidelined and eventually sifted out. These altering roles in social associations have actually made us understand and recognise the social connections that are prioritised by us during times of severe crisis. This pandemic has sent out a message loud and clear that - our true priorities are not always what we say they are. They are truly revealed in the way we live.

Coronavirus crisis - How it reshaped business

The Coronavirus crisis and its impact on the world economy have reaffirmed the assertion of leading business experts that apart from every other aspect of a business we have to concentrate on the aspect of social responsibility. And the social responsibility of business is to only bring about an increase in profit well within the law. As this business ideal has gained a strong hold on the practices being followed in the business world, with the current crisis reaffirming the idea of unpredictability, the focus has shifted significantly towards long term profits.

The business world, before the Coronavirus crisis, had always had self-interest at the helm of its organisational behaviour. This had resulted in a growing casual attitude towards employment, as far as hiring was concerned. This resulted in more and more people holding jobs that earned them pittance. Incidentally it is these very employees, who had grown to be a significant number, who felt the brunt of the economic fallout of the Pandemic.

In the current crisis a need was felt to establish an honest conversation, across organisations, which could help work out an effective response plan for them. Doing so called for trust and commitment on the part of the senior management. It was this commitment which helped them identify the reasons that were acting as a barrier for effective execution of their business plans during the present testing times.

The coronavirus challenge, like any crisis, offered the senior management with a great chance to develop a culture based on trust. And it had to be acted upon

rapidly else it could severely undermine their competence at developing a culture that was trust-based, in the years ahead.

The speed with which the Pandemic spread across the world is a clear reminder of how the well-being of each one of us is interconnected. The way people have reached out to each other to offer support only reiterates the immense willingness in us to use our abilities to help one another. And it is this truth that will reveal our capability of carrying forward the results into the future when everything hopefully returns to normal (or at least to our closest idea of normal).

Increased customer involvement

The current conditions have also made it clear to leadership in business that involving customers and generating conditions that allow them to be more helpful can in return help the organisations to perform better. It was proved that when the aspect of service provision is based on true partnership between the business and its customers, it can have a positive impact on the way the employees perform. Their productivity goes up because of which the outcome of the services are enhanced. This augments the business experience for everyone involved.

Most of the current enterprising business leaders have recognised the current barriers to engaged productivity to be an inability to help, lacking the knowledge of how to help and the belief that helping is not important.

Organisations which involve their customers in the process have successfully managed to overcome all these three barriers. It doesn't have to be a very evident process. It could be something as simple as the announcement made nearing the

end of flights for fliers to hand over their leftover trash to the crew members coming to collect them. When it is further made clear to the customers that it helps keep the flights clean and on time, everyone is keen to help. So it is a win win for both.

For this idea to work, it is pertinent to understand and establish objective ways in which the help of the customers can be channelized. The success of the process depends on identifying some key points like how the customers can help, what instructions should be given to them to do so and how to create a system transparent enough for them to understand how their involvement in the process can bring about a positive difference to everyone who is involved. In order to do so leaders of business need to work on providing improved platforms and opportunities for increased interactions between the employees and the company's clients. This will in turn help run businesses better.

This way of working takes on a whole new meaning during the crisis. Simple communication with the customers over say the delivery of essential items. Due to pandemic it was made clear that to ensure safety of the employees and the customers, the items being delivered will be left outside their homes and every payment will have to be made digitally to eliminate spreading of the dreaded infection in any way. This helped boost sales as people felt reassured about having their groceries and other essential items being delivered at their doorstep without having to venture out. At the same time, the instructions regarding the digitalised payment method made them feel that the company is serious about the health of their clients and their employees. This not only reiterated their trust in the business but also made them feel that they were contributing to the system as well. It is this kind of co-dependence that will help businesses tide over these critical times.

Remote work - the new effective business strategy

Working remotely or Work from home is not a new concept. It has been around for quite a while. But till date it was more of an option for new mothers to carry motherhood and their career in tandem. But the crisis has given a whole new meaning and direction to this underexplored aspect of working.

A year later as the world is still trying to come in grips with the Covid crisis which shows no signs of abating, especially with the news of emergence of a newer and more virulent strain, Remote working is increasingly becoming an attractive option for companies and employees who are trying to work out how to continue to be productive. The concept has already proven its efficacy in the past year and there have been a number of factors that have worked towards making it more impactful.

Remote work tech tools - Online platforms like Zoom, Slack etc. seamlessly shifted the boardroom experience to people's living rooms and home offices. Even after the virus has long abated these tools will continue to be as helpful (in a different capacity of course) as they have been now.

Another reason that aided the success of remote working was restructuring the organisational structure of companies. This made the process of communication, socialization and coordination of work efforts take place smoothly. But organisations did not just rely on these remote tools as the only means of communication.

While synchronous communication took place via Zoom or Skype, simultaneous asynchronous communication over email and other platforms also ensured that the time restriction while communicating is not a deterrent for improved

performance. Companies used options like Good doc to pass on instructions, explain work procedures, record developments or setbacks, keep a track of performance results among other things. This ensured transparency and lucidity of communication across time zones. And there was a lesser chance of losing crucial information or data due to improper communication, thus ensuring that everyone was on the same page.

But these tools did more than just provide a platform for official communication. They helped people socialise, with a semblance of a workplace without feeling isolated. The ease of work atmosphere and correct usage of these remote working tools helped productivity go up despite the world being caught in the middle of this terrible pandemic.

Fortune favours the prepared - to twist the age old proverb a bit. And it has never been more evident than in the present scenario. Companies that had an overall broad concern for all their stakeholders and followed good workplace practices did find themselves in a better position to handle and reduce the impact of the pandemic crisis.

Businesses have woken up to the awareness that, now more than ever, is the time to 'out of the box' thinking. That the overall good of the company depends upon not just a few stakeholders but also upon everything that happens in, around and outside it. Their method of operation works as the proverbial stone in the lake of disruption or creation of ripples of activity in their industry. More than anything, the pandemic has contributed to the growing realisation that thinking outside the organisational structures also helps within the business. A crisis like this tends to

magnify issues like loss of control, elevated uncertainty levels etc. and it becomes relevant to restore a feeling of positivity among the employees.

All in all, the coronavirus crisis, despite all the initial hiccups, has ended up creating a practical and ethical imperative for us to do more that matters than just working for profit.

Impact of Covid -19 on science and technology

The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) has had a serious effect on many science, space and technology institutions and government agencies worldwide. This has led to a reduction in productivity in quite a number of research programs in various fields. On the other hand it has also opened up new funding for specific research in various governmental agencies across the globe in the field of medical research. Scientific data is making its way into the social media platforms and getting a lot of media scrutiny before it is presented to their peers for a formal review. Scientists are working overtime to review, edit, analyse and publish large quantities of their data and manuscripts in the shortest time possible for onward dissemination amongst the people as well their scientific peer groups.

This increase in the level of communication has led to an increased level of cooperation and competence within the scientific community like never observed before. Bodies like WHO have been conducting telethons, different levels and kinds of clinical trials to help raise funds and find a cure for the ongoing pandemic, resulting in an increased fervour in the scientific and research arena. But it would be a fallacy to say that all scientists have been affected positively by the pandemic. Female scientists, for instance, especially those with young children and other familial responsibilities have been unable to make any substantial contribution to the research process. While on the other hand those who are involved in active research have been overworked to the point of facing a potential burn out.

Ever since the outbreak of the pandemic on the world scenario, countries have been actively promoting the research and development of medicines, vaccines and testing agents for the virus. Researchers have been racing against time to develop vaccines using various technical methods. This growth in scientific research has been actively channelled towards clinical treatment, prevention of virus and practise of control measures. No efforts are being spared by either doctors or scientists conducting research, on testing the efficacy of drugs while also exploring various new avenues of treatment methods. This information made available on the public forum (like the internet) helps spread accurate information and dispel the various rumours and incorrect information that is often the fallout of improper knowledge of existing situation.

Due to the urgent nature of the crisis, the scientific community is actively working together with their respective governmental agencies to launch short-notice or long-term initiatives as well.

While the medical research has seen an increase in activity levels, other areas of science like space and technology which have been on the forefront till a few years back, have been relegated to the background. Institutions like NASA have temporarily closed down their field centre visitor complexes while encouraging most of their employees to work remotely. Processes of production and manufacture of the Space Launch Systems were also pulled back. Similarly organisations like World Meteorological Department too have had to pull back on their research and observation activities owing to restrictions in covid prone areas and lack of staff for tending to repair and maintenance of their scientific equipment. There has also been

a notable decline in scientific inputs from areas that conduct observation procedures manually.

The current pandemic crisis had also led to a unique collaboration between the best of all scientific fields in an effort to unite together in finding a cure for Covid. One very significant result of this collaboration has been an increased access to information regarding the progress of their work to the general public. Portals run by Cambridge University Press, The Lancet, Springer Nature etc. have been major contributors to the process, to name a few.

Science research giants like IBM have joined hands with NASA, in collaboration with industry titans like Amazon, Microsoft, Google etc., to combine their joint resources for working towards drug discovery, forecasting the spread of the disease, possible vaccination models.

Telecommunications is yet another field that has seen a major shift in profile since the pandemic. With people having to resort to working remotely, increased activity on social media platforms and the internet becoming the primary entertainment and information source, the online traffic has increased significantly. On the other hand with labourers and other daily wagers losing on their income, in countries like China, it has resulted in a significant decrease in subscribers to mobile service companies. At the same time virtual meeting companies like Zoom and MS Teams have provided a suitable substitute by creating a 'workplace' like environment for work as well as socialising activities.

The currently ongoing Covid crisis has accentuated the compelling need for nations across the globe to concentrate more on elevating, practically as well as in terms of policy, the fields of science, technology and innovation (or known in industry parlance as STI). Increasing efforts are being made in order to pass on the benefits of developments made in these three fields into the daily lives of people. All the research, collaborations and knowledge banks will immensely add to the process of coping with the immediate effects of the pandemic and hopefully in the times that follow in future.

The cornification of the entertainment industry

The industry that saw a complete transformation following the Covid crisis has beyond doubt been the Entertainment industry. No other business was brought to such a standstill following the lockdown. With all major events, across the globe, being cancelled following the outbreak of Covid, not only was there financial setback, the livelihood of over 10 million people bore the brunt of it. The losses faced by the industry ran to the tunes of thousands of crores. In fact, surveys conducted following the initial months of the lockdown revealed that the first two month brought about a loss of a staggering 3,000 to 5,000 crores! And this is just a rough estimation. A major part of the industry is fed by organising and covering public events like concerts, live performances, fashion n lifestyle shows etc. The postponement and subsequent cancellation of these events resulted in the disconnecting the life support of the entertainment industry.

It is not just the direct employees of this industry who have faced the heat. The industry provides employment and supports a number of other tertiary branches like advertising, tourism, the hospitality industry etc. As per a rough estimation, the global film industry has already suffered a setback to the tune of \$5 billion.

Following lockdown, as more and more people stay at home, there has been a dramatic shift in the media that people chose for getting their daily fix of information and entertainment. With the restrictions being imposed on public gatherings and limited viewing permissions at cinemas, people have started opting for more and more in-house entertainment options. This has led to an increased media consumption at homes all around the world. Which has in turn resulted in a heightened usage of entertainment services like online gaming, video on-demand and movie and series streaming apps like Netflix. Restrictions following strict quarantine measures lead to a boom in creation and release of short films and web series, a hitherto unexplored and untapped area of the entertainment industry.

There was a significant jump in the average weekly download of apps and TV viewership during this period. The impact on the entertainment industry was a mix of highs and lows with some parts seeing a significant dip, while there were the others that opened up newer avenues of getting entertainment right to people's homes.

With the current crisis not showing any signs of abating anytime soon, it is impossible to gauge the long term impact that coronavirus will leave on the media industry, though it will not really be able to recover to the full glory as it was before the crisis. This will primarily be due to the new changes that have been incorporated

to fill the needs of the hour. It now remains to be seen how the impact and the extent of disruption will be determined by the kind of content that is produced and distributed by the media in that time that follows post pandemic.

The entertainment industry including movies and television depend a lot upon their physical operations for their sustenance. A sudden break in the production system can and will in turn affect the success rate of streaming apps like Netflix, Amazon Prime, to mention a few. Their subscriber base, which highly depends on the viewing lists in their libraries, will dwindle significantly if they are unable to add new shows or movies to their kitty.

The quarantine restrictions have not left even media giants like Disney, untouched. The strict enforcement of quarantine restrictions has forced Disney to announce the closure of several of their theme parks and cruise lines. Same goes for the sports industry as well. Without any live matches taking place in stadiums across the world, the interest of the broadcasters, advertisers as well as the viewers will wane.

While the media industry may be one that felt the burn of the pandemic the most, it is also the lone source through which the entire humanity can keep track of the current Covid crisis and is one of the primary ways to overcome the desolation which is a direct result of social distancing. No matter what the circumstance and whatever changes are brought about in the world, there will always be an ever present need to stay informed and be entertained. Just the way the entire industry has managed to diversify (with no small effort) from a grand platform to smaller

media platforms they will continue to find innovative and appealing ways of reaching out and fulfilling the needs of their target audience. Beyond that, they will be sailing uncharted seas.

How Covid helped personal growth

Like with every other crisis, Covid has not been without its own share of positives. One of the few good outcomes of the crisis has been that it has forced each and every one of us to pause from the constant hamster wheel-like life that we had started living. It made us sit up and think, truly think, about ourselves and our own personal growth as an individual and as a member of the society.

If we observe the current scenario as it has been over the past one year, we will make an interesting observation. During the pandemic the reaction of people, across the world, can broadly be categorised into two kinds - one of extreme kindness or that of extreme selfishness. There was nothing in between, just these two extremes. This clearly mirrors the true human nature and highlights the importance of maintaining a fine balance between taking care of one's own requirements, while at the same time giving back to the society at large. This is an issue many are battling with, especially during such trying times.

Crisis tends to bring out the true nature of every individual to the fore. Sometimes what emerges may be a trait you never thought you possessed. This is the time when the glass half empty and glass half full aspect of a person's personality comes into play.

A negative persona may lead to developing feelings of despair and hopelessness, with thoughts rotating about only about the short-term impact of the current situation. The focus in these individuals will be more on the situation as it

exists at this given moment instead of the challenge that the adversity poses. This would in turn result in bringing out their selfish streak, with all their efforts being directed towards attaining and securing their own happiness.

A positive persona, on the other hand, would think about using the adverse conditions as a way of not just attaining personal growth but will also in the process work towards uplifting those around them with the realisation that the only way to rise above the situation is when everyone does it together. They will have a long term view in terms of the aftermath of the entire current scenario. Their own actions will go a long way in contributing to the creation of a better place not just for themselves, but also for the people in general.

This brings to my mind a very famous, and in this instance a very pertinent, quote by Albert Einstein who said, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle". And I truly believe in the wisdom of these words as being very apt in the current scenario. Eventually it all boils down to our attitude about small things that really make a big difference.

The current times are a clear indication of this. The primary lesson that each one of us has learnt in this pandemic is the need for us to slow down and to enjoy each and every passing moment of our lives. With no need to rush to work in the morning we can enjoy watching the sun rise in leisure (or a sunset for that matter). It has actually given us time and space to spend more time with our families. Getting to

know them all over again without the constraints of time and work determining the amount of time we spend interacting with them.

Writing, painting, crafting, reading. Whatever your interest or hobby might have been. The pandemic and the forced enclosure has forced many to dust out their tools and get back to starting or restarting to do things that they had always wanted to start or get back to doing. Pursuing activities like that and doing the things that actually give them happiness has not only retained their sanity during events like the lockdown but at the same time in many cases has led them to finding out a whole new direction in life and career.

Increasing number of people found solace in activities like fitness and meditation that helped their physical and spiritual growth. But at the same time there were those who were unable to keep up with the constantly changing and all new environment. This led to increasing cases of anxiety and depression. But once again for those looking for a solution, there were counselling ground and helplines that helped them keep their heads above the turbulent waters.

The pandemic helped social media redeem its image and reinvent itself as a connector instead of a distance like it had increasingly become till the pandemic struck the world. Through various media sites, people were able to maintain the much needed human connection, albeit virtual, with all the people who truly mattered to them. It helped them, once again, realise that interpersonal skills were more than just a topic of study in their management class. The reality of the statement 'Man is a social animal' was truly recognised in the last one year.

Have you heard about the traditional Japanese art of Kintsugi? It is a process wherein artisans fill the crack of the broken pottery with gold and silver, reinventing them from damaged pieces to works of art. Surviving through this crisis and continuing life in the years ahead will require each of us to Kintsugise our minds to continue with our personal growth.

The covid crisis has shown that people are adept at adapting themselves to the current situation and also have a clear understanding of what should be the ideal social behaviour in such trying times.

DIY projects are no longer restricted to material things, but spiritual development as well. Once humans woke up to their own frailty, they became more tolerant towards those around them as well as the curveballs that life was throwing at them.

Of course, like I mentioned earlier, the crisis did not necessarily bring out the best in all as was evidenced by the increased incidences of domestic violence and abuse. Then there were also people who lost their near and dear ones to the disease.

Yet another interesting development that was observed was an increasing respect among people for providers of special duties to the society especially health workers, social workers, police, sanitisation workers etc.

Despite fear and the stigma that followed the pandemic, it was rather refreshingly surprising to see that there was an increase in the aspect of volunteer work with an increasing number of people finding innovative ways and means to offer their skills and their time to those who were in need.

In the months that followed the outbreak, it was observed that there was an increase in the level of volunteer activities at the local level as well. Whether it was distributing meals among the homeless or providing food to the strays on the street or delivering medicines and other essentials to the aged at their homes, people came in millions to help each other. And what made this entire volunteer process unique was that each and every action was self-initiated.

Following the restrictive measures of lockdowns and the strictest of norms of social distancing to keep the infection at bay, there is a constant team of volunteers who are mobilising online efforts while finding brand new ways to play an important role in the coronavirus response.

Volunteers with skill and experience, having returned to their homes from their placements overseas are continuing their relentless efforts towards supporting their causes through virtual platforms. Local teams have been playing a pivotal role in keeping the on-ground programs up and running, while providing direct support to their parent organisations.

The current situation has taught us that human connections are vital and volunteering is the glue that holds them together. Let us hope that the positive

lessons that have been learned in both are carried onwards into the years that will follow, long after the Covid crisis is over.

How Covid-19 altered our lives - positively

When we think about the positive impact of Covid - 19 on our lives the first thought that comes to mind is that the sky has never been bluer and the grass never been greener. Nor have families, friends and societies, world over, been closer than they are now. Never before have board games been played so much nor the subtle flavour of home cooked meals made the homes fragrant.

The pandemic has changed the way we emote, respond to and retain our relationships. Now it is work 'and' family instead of the earlier 'either or' situation where one had to choose between work or family.

Not only do we have with us a world where nature chose a crisis to recover her strength and beauty, we have seen an improvement in the general health and health practices being followed by people the world over. The persistent efforts on maintaining the highest level of sanitation and insistence on following strict safety precautions against the spread of the disease (wearing masks for hours at end, for instance) took care of that aspect.

The positive changes that Covid has forced us to make in our lives and in ourselves as human beings is going to stay on for long after the pandemic has left us. The current shift in trend towards eating healthy and staying fit is going to result in a stronger humanity, mentally and physically. There has also been a never before awareness about health and health issues. Health officials, researchers and medics are of the opinion that the crisis has ended up offering a unique window of an

opportunity for positive health effects. The primary one being, people being more receptive to accept and act upon public health messages. Among all, there has been a significant reduction in paediatric cases with respiratory illnesses.

While it has not been possible for children to meet up with their friends physically and indulge in playing their favourite outdoor games, the pandemic successfully took them out of the rut of school followed by endless hours of soccer and ballet classes, for instance. Now internet (once the topic of conflict in every household) has been tamed and its power harnessed to be used a source of information and learning. New doors have been opened for anyone wanting to pick up a new skill set with everything from music to carpentry being taught online.

Many of us have reconnected with ourselves through our old hobbies and some of us have found new career aspirations because of our newly developed interests. Covid has made people realise that the true priority in life is human connection. You can't really have a conversation with a closet full of designer labels, that you have nowhere to go wearing, anyway.

It awakened the Good Samaritan in each one of us and made us realise that every single one of us in our own little way can do our bit for bringing about a positive change in our society. Whether it be offering a patient ear to a friend who seems depressed or to do grocery runs for elderly neighbours. Every little bit counts. Fitness too is no longer a fad but is an instrument for shielding the body against infections making the body stronger.

Never has the world been flooded with innovative ideas as it was during this crisis. The quarantine forced lockdown which gave rise to an unprecedented deluge of tips, tricks and life hacks helped retain our sanity and provided the strength to smile through it all. It also offered ideas about doing our share for helping the needy within our communities. From platforms for remote working to creative videos to occupy the spare hours the days seem to be filled with, companies across the world came up with ways and means to keep you connected with the people around you. Add to this a steady stream of videos providing nonstop entertainment right into our homes.

Organisations have started encouraging transparency of communication between their employees and customers, encouraging both to participate equally in achieving the end results. Surprisingly the crisis has increasingly become a time for breakthroughs and innovative measures. After all, necessity is the mother of invention!

A constant track is kept on the impact of the pandemic on people and our societies at large through many online surveys. The valuable information collected therein is then used to restrain the spread of the infection any further.

The concept of 'Working from home' has faced a resurrection with both the business as well as the employees that keep them afloat reaping the full benefits of the process. It has ensured that while following the strictest of restrictions to curb the infection, the economy stays afloat. It has also dissolved the concept of geographical divisions standing in between hiring talented workforce. The future will now see

lesser investment in larger office spaces and more on hiring talented employees, irrespective of which time zone they belong to.

The complete transition to remote working has also led to increased trust between teams. The companies have learnt to trust the integrity of their employees and have faith in their work ethics without the need for them to be under constant supervision.

Yet another positive fallout of the crisis is the lowering of property rates, especially in tier 1 cities thus making affordable housing well within the reach of the general public.

The digitalisation of education is yet another positive offering of the current times. Thanks to constant innovations and developments being made in the digital world, students across the world and age groups were able to continue with their education without a break. Virtual classrooms, from the comfort of their homes, have in turn increased involvement of the parents in the education procedure being followed by educational institutions. The resultant reduction in infrastructural costs on the part of the institutions have in turn led to making quality education more affordable. As the online education system continues to grow with leaps and bounds, there is a bright chance of increasing their reach, making education accessible to each and every section of the society, all over the world.

Reducing prices of fuel have been yet another positive fallout of the pandemic. Another thing that has seen a decline is the crime rate in cities. Crime

rates have plummeted to an all-time low especially in the initial part of the year, due to people mostly staying indoors with limited public movement due to lockdown.

After living under the shadow of the constant scare of a depleting ozone layer leaving the earth and its inhabitants exposed to harmful rays of the sun, the lockdown that followed quarantine helped nature heal and restore at least a part of her original glory. The amount of difference a couple of months of lack of 'civilisation' made to the planet is commendable. Animals are starting to reappear and with this homeostasis, nature is reclaiming what is truly hers and has made humanity's position clear on this planet.

The past one year saw a significant shift from the concepts of internationalisation and globalisation of businesses. An increasing inclination towards locally produced goods and services has been providing the much needed boost to the process of community production. In addition to this there has been an increasing predisposition towards everything natural from cosmetics to eatables. There has been a tremendous shift in the eating habits worldwide with people returning to their roots as far as eating habits are concerned. Combined with the rising interest in fitness, it will result in a future generation that is raised with healthy lifestyle choices.

If we look at the entire situation from this perspective it is amply clear that the pandemic had more good to offer than bad. Yes, there have been lives that have been lost, people who have lost their livelihoods, some issues like domestic violence and failed relationships. But if we look at the wider picture, the good outweighs the

bad. As William Shakespeare once said, “It is neither good nor bad, but thinking makes it so.” So, essentially it is our outlook and our thought process with respect to the ongoing Coronavirus crisis which will finally colour it good or bad. For a pandemic it has reawakened humanity in us as a civilisation and from the depths of societal deprivation that we had all relegated to over the past few years, here on the graph can only go up. It is for us to remember the lessons we learnt from the pandemic and make it our life mantra for the years that will follow.