

Learning to Live with Coronavirus Disease...

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A lot has already been said about coronavirus disease-2019 in the few months that it has arrived in this world. So much that it has been trending on all social platforms and is being discussed nonstop on all cloud meeting sites, Chinese or otherwise. Many wise men have scripted thesis on coronavirus disease (COVID) and its cure on what's app and cartoon artists and comedians have doled out innumerable memes and jokes on it. A whole lot of data has been analyzed and hundreds of research articles have been published. It is all done and dusted; I really have nothing more to say. I am only learning to live with it.

I must confess that in the initial days when the virus arrived, I had an adrenaline rush. It gave me palpitations and sleepless nights. I read all the long precautionary messages on what's app till the end, attended every webinar and made notes; I downloaded all videos that showed method of wearing the personal protective equipment (PPE) and even the ones that described recipes of herbal decoctions to fight the virus. I drank honey and lemon water every morning, ate *tulsi*, and also listened to the coughing lady and her advisory on the phone without frowning. It was a new situation, truly novel and I gave it all my attention.

At work, I embraced all the required COVID protective gear with enthusiasm. The first day I wore the beautiful beak-shaped white N95 mask with the yellow elastics, I almost wept. I mean I looked so beautiful, like an imported parrot. I realized I could even take selfies without having to pout my lips, I was elated. And when I entered the COVID ward clad in the infamous PPE, the blue impermeable outfit that literally covered me from head to toe, I felt every bit like a lost Penguin, wandering into a desert. Working in it, I even discovered the unexplored efficiency of my sweat glands. I was overwhelmed by their ability to manufacture fresh sweat at such alarmingly fast rates and large volumes. I was even surprised by the capacity of my lungs to keep working despite being smothered by the mask for hours. They were new discoveries, I was astounded.

Excited by the new way of life, I went on and posted my PPE pics all over the Internet. Families and non-medico friends sent me plenty of folded hand emoji's and thanked me for being a warrior. The face shield stuck around my head felt like a crown, the policemen letting me drive on the streets during the lockdown after seeing the big Red Cross and the serpentine symbol on my

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car, made me feel like a VIP and all the neighbors clapping for me, made me proud.

It has been half of a year now and there are no signs of COVID or its aura leaving the world. I am slowly mellowing down. The excitement and the fear is wearing off. I am learning to live with it. Mask now feels like a natural outgrowth from the mouth and PPE fits as comfortably as my own skin. Strange practices now seem totally normal. Like I no longer get scared or put my hands up when the security guard at my apartment gate points the gun-shaped thermal scanner right onto my forehead. I do not find it odd to listen to webinars while grating coconut in the kitchen and I do not long to touch my face even if there is an obstinate fly sitting on the nose.

I neither palpitate on hearing the everyday COVID statistics nor do I hyperventilate when my colleagues turn positive. I do not scratch my head when the testing guidelines and protocols change every week and I do not sweat when another nearby premise gets sealed down. I am totally learning to live with it.

The pandemic has taught me innumerable lessons like it has to everyone. It has taught me that *pani puri* can be made very well at home and that cake can be baked even in a cooker. It has made me realize that not visiting the mall will save half my salary and that amazon originals are better than mainstream movies. On a more philosophical note, it has taught a lot of things about life too but then again a lot has already been written about it, I really have nothing more to say.

This crisis is probably going to last longer and we may have to endure much more. We have no choice but to go on with resilience. Life throws unexpected bouncers and only the ones who adapt quickly and smile through it, survive. So let us learn to adapt, smile, and continue to live.