

## What is “Normal?”

During the Covid pandemic, we got used to restrictions, limitations, non-socialising, non-touching, hugging. We were told to keep our distance. Wear gloves, wash hands scrupulously, sanitize, wear masks. We lived in a cocoon of isolationism, a bubble of so called created protectionism. We were told that it was for our own good, for our own survival and the survival of our neighbour and loved ones.

As obedient servants, we heeded the advice while displaying symptoms of fear, mental health issues as we wondered about the price we were asked to pay for our continued wellbeing and sanity.

Being bombarded with advice from experts and other self-styled gurus, we were inundated with statistics, deaths, hospital overcrowding, travel restrictions, as well as doomsday predictions. We became more conscious about space, our space, making sure that we didn't invade another's space in case we contaminated or were contaminated.

Troubling questions began to raise ugly heads: Will we ever see the end of this? How long more? Is there any hope? What is normal? Will things ever be the same again? What will the future be like? Will we ever take anything for granted again? Will we have to live in fear for the rest of our lives? Why weren't we allowed to say “goodbye” to loved ones who were taken so early and abruptly from us?

Suddenly, a light came from the tunnel, in the form of a rescue. The train carried a vaccine that gave us a glimmer of hope, a spark that might light our way into some kind of future. But, soon, promises were dented with percentages and complications. Still, we lived in hope, even with unknown consequences.

Through it, all, we have had time to reflect on life, its meaning and purpose. We have been able to evaluate our own personhood and place in life and in relationships. We have become less presumptuous and less predictable. We have become more reserved and more reflective. We live life less hurried and less prepared. We embrace less certainty and less surety.

The deeper psychological scars have yet to surface as we wonder if we have the resources and will power to engage them when they surface. Life has become more mysterious and less frantic; more sustentative and less take for granted. Life has been infused with more questions than answers; more hesitancy than certainty; more uneasiness than assuredness.

Will life be ever normal again, people ask. They are met with, life will be a new normal. But what is that new normal? Is it normality baked from yesterday's yeast of hindsight or is it a normality that will take us to diverging roads with no clear signposts? Will this new normal be a nostalgic hankering for the seemingly predictable past or an excursion into uncharted waters of upheaval and discontent?

A recent post on Facebook, said: “Finally, we can get out, meet our friends, and socialize.” Below the copy, was a picture of four persons sitting round a table. Each had a cell phone and each individual was thumbing away, conversing with someone in the distance while being oblivious to the others sitting beside them.

I wondered will this become the new normal or is it a true reflection that we wish to return to the past without its lessons, and with the same social distancing we engaged in then by choice and technology but, because of Covid, was masked under the guise of a different kind of social distancing.

Through it all, I wonder will we have no choice but to embrace the terrible beauty that will be encased in the silver lining of a pandemic called Covid.