



Isolation as Liberation

Supriya Sahu¹

Abstract:

In this unprecedented time, while we're surrounded by constant fear and being given instructions on how to best fight this pandemic, people have also become vulnerable to depression and various other mental illnesses more than ever. A sudden stop to all social activities, formal and informal gatherings have led to frustration and anger at homes which is also leading to rise in domestic violence all over the world. Even though, the pandemic has hit all of us tremendously, be it a student or a corporate employee, this is the time rethink and reinvent our lives. The time to educate ourselves and to rekindle our long lost passions, and even try to monetize it. Whether we realise it or not, it's the best time to disconnect from the world for a while, as we already are, and go into solitude to re-discover ourselves for an even better tomorrow than what we had.

¹ supriyaiglesias12@gmail.com

In this era, that we live in, sitting alone in a restaurant or having lunch alone in a college canteen is almost undesirable. Most people prefer to be surrounded by people all the time in some or the other manner. Apparently, the person who has more friends and attention is considered to be smarter and admirable. And the people who are afraid to be alone or to be found alone, this phase has hit them harder. As there is no physical proximity and socializing, feelings of loneliness and boredom is at all-time high. Also, most people are likely to slip into unhealthy routines like not exercising and eating junk foods. In the time when almost every person is experiencing rough times, solitude could be our gateway to make it through this period and come out of it much stronger.

The real reason why most people avoid being alone is because sitting alone in silence reveal things about themselves that they are not proud of. In solitude, all of our pretentiousness and hypocrisy that we live through and witness the entire day, comes out on the surface. Our mind starts to whisper all the harsh truths that we had been

desperately trying to run away from. Revealing how we act differently among certain people. How we make the choice to satisfy our ego, which in turn amplifies our insecurity. How we act against what we believe, because we feel scared as to how other people might perceive us. Hence, we continue to live the way others expect us to be.

Misery is the cool:

For most people, the kind of lifestyle that they choose for themselves is out of fear, fear from disapproval. We try to fit in to the group that we look up to in the expense of changing ourselves, while neglecting our own values and beliefs which only hurts us in the long run.

Living in this manner is worse than being alone. Neglecting our own values, in order to get approval from other people, makes us much lonelier and frustrated later on than we realise at the moment.

People who live to impress other people end up making themselves bitter and lonely. They expose themselves to various disappointments and embarrassments by seeking approval from people around them.

Most people are unable to stand themselves being found alone, so they tag along with just about anyone, even if that person is the person whom they don't like, which makes them feel exponentially worse about themselves. While we might find them laughing and having fun in a crowd, and around people, however, not the same case when they're alone.

We don't get to see how people live within the four walls of their house. We return home exhausted from work. Exhausted from having to pretend fake emotions, walking around with a mask. And subsequently, trying to numb it all. By ingesting unhealthy food and drinks.

People tend to relate to us more when we complain about the world, about our family or our bosses. Complaining how relationships are hard to handle and how we'd rather stay at office than going home. And so many people could relate to it. And by sharing, we find support and feel everyone's life the same. And we don't feel the need to change our lives. However, we don't come across many people who tell us that they really like what they are

doing. And that their lives are going well than they expected.

Lockdown, a blessing in disguise?:

This forced isolation due to COVID-19 has exposed us to the point that we never expected. However, if we are brave enough to face it, this could turn out to be blessing. And who knows we might be living a totally different life post-pandemic period.

The reason why meditation and yoga practices have become all the rage nowadays, is because it has changed people's experience of lives.

Meditation helps us take a break from the world and allows us to look within, letting us aware of our own thoughts. While its uncomfortable in the beginning to face our minds, becomes very rewarding after we pass the initial stage. Because we can't move ahead with our lives and live the way we want until we have faced and accepted our previous mistakes.

So the solitude demands us to face ourselves. Face our thoughts and to become accountable for our own actions. When we know what our thoughts are, we can work upon them to improve them. Because our thoughts affect our lives to a great extent than we

realise. And how are we going to change them if we don't know what they are?

The more consciously we live, the better actions and choices we are able to make, by not falling back into our old ways.

Solitude helps us know ourselves better. That is what Buddhism says, "Silence is not silent, it is full of answers". Therefore, when we start spending more time with ourselves, we start to understand our reasons behind our choices. And when we know the origin of our choices, we can influence it. This pandemic really gives us the opportunity to take a break from our uninspiring and jailed routines. To pause and to reflect onto our lives that we're living. But

This time that has come in disguise of a pandemic, could be a blessing for us. To think back on the past few years of our life and to make a conclusion on the way you feel about them. And how we could improve or better our lives.

Even though, we're being surrounded by frustration and fear at this time. Solitude could help us lighten our moods and lessen our stress from the current situation. These days, most are

cursing the whole situation and getting all worked up over how the pandemic has ruined their life completely. And the ways their children's life has been affected. They feel their life has come to an abrupt halt as they no longer can go to that bar or cafeteria with their friends to relax and party. Their freedom is being restricted and controlled, making them even more angry at the whole situation. People have started to feel much lonelier than ever before, watching television mindlessly and eating junk food and not exercising. Their routines have been disrupted on a major scale. Nevertheless, deliberate isolation could be our doorway to the ray of hope that we all are looking for. People who didn't have good relationships with their spouses earlier, is worsening even more. And very few are able to rebuild their not-so-good relationships. Working people are much more affected in this pandemic than college or school students, emotionally, because they don't know how to use their free time that they have got now, which is making them anxious and miserable.

This is the time to redefine and re-evaluate your values and beliefs by going deep into meditation. And as we

continue to do it, we will feel much lighter. Allowing us to see things in a better light.

However, in order to experience that, we have to understand that experiencing solitude improves and enriches our lives so in case you're tempted to leave mid-way, remind yourself that it will be beneficial for you and your family.

There's a reason why our scriptures have always encouraged us to experience solitude. To experience silent moments from time to time in a day. It makes us more conscious of our thoughts and actions rather than going by the expectations of the people around us. When we start living consciously, we're less likely to regret our actions, because our actions become less predicated on what others expect of us, and more on what we want from ourselves. We start to detach ourselves from what other people think of us and begin to consult and rely on ourselves for any decision. When we start to become much clearer with our own intentions and values, other people disapproving of it, doesn't affect us.

Consequently, the things we buy and the work we do is based more on necessity than a product that needs to be shown off. And now instead of looking outside for approval and admiration, we look inward for the choices we make, which makes us feel peaceful and confident about ourselves.

Deliberate isolation is liberation:

The reason why our scriptures preached of detachment and solitude, is because attachment to superficial things destroys our sense of peace and peaks our anxiety. And when we someday do lose our nice car that we obsessed, it leaves us bitter and resentful.

Therefore, this is the perfect time to get clear on our likes and interests and to engage ourselves more in that work. We don't have to leave the job that we're doing, if that helps us pay our bills. However, we need to start making time for things that makes us feel alive. This pandemic, discover your interests or continue working on your passions if you left it mid-way for whatever reason. Things that when you do, makes you lose track of time. And that is, what you love to do, will liberate

you from the day-to-day worries and would help you manage your emotions in a better way.

Through the work that we love, a sense of purpose arises, which makes us aware about our duty on this earth. When we know our duty in this world, and engage in it simply because it fills our soul. While also able to help the world in some form, without any expectations of acknowledgement or credit or applause from outside, we attain liberation from the world.