

Images and notes our times

Instructor: Miss Hira Nabi

Student: Arham Bin Asif (F2017-580)

During the storm

Just before the storm was about to hit us, our lives were different, our spaces, our routines and even our thoughts changed. Absorbing the threat, the terror and the suffocation for being stuck in one place, I decided to write something to this virus and talk about the fuss. Just when I got to sit in the room as if everything in the world is dead calm, I came to realize a couple of facts and I noticed things that I did not really bother thinking about earlier. It started when one day I sat by the window just to brainstorm and think about work, I felt suffocated and frustrated because it was so self-imposed and frustrating to sit in a space where I might not prefer sitting otherwise. I realized later when I looked out of the window, there's a huge building covering the sun, blocking my sight and horizon, the only thing I could see was a huge wall of some building that might be used as a residence or an office maybe. It took me a while to come back from the state because I started wondering about the day there will be no visible sunlight and when we will climb the high buildings, all we would be seeing will be these walls that would block the beautiful carpet of nature that we still get to see eventually, How suffocating would that be to be living under the shadow of manmade structures and how scared would be the atmosphere.

While I compile my puny sorrows and start off with the destruction this lockdown has brought upon me and everyone, I would acknowledge the unintended benefits it came down to us with. Amidst the world rife of the virus, being limited to the four walls of our room during the lockdown has taught everyone a lot but I believe it has been a real eye opener for me. It has made my vision clear on so many things that were unseen before

or did not account to much importance to me.

The details I often overlooked or never cared to ponder over, the hidden messages the world gives all the time, it all seems to be unfolding in front of my eyes loud and clear. Everything may seem to have come at a halt yet everything is still working, completely functional, the time still being boundless and progressing with every breath I take. The birds are still chirping bearing news of a new day and crickets filling in the deadly silence of the night. It all continues to work in its perfect order despite there being no cars honking on the roads, no friends cheering at a tea stall and no large gatherings to attend. If you ask me what I love the most in the world, I would reply to all things, "Music". And this imprisonment during the lockdown has taught me to listen to the music of the world, the earth dancing with axis it tilts, the birds chiming songs of a new life and crickets singing us a lullaby to sleep. Everyone is confined to their nooks where the virtual world is our new best friend and this lockdown coming suddenly with restrictions has made me comfortable in taking to the walls as well, at least it is helping me be more expressive and there is no shame in letting out what and how you feel.

A couple of birds that fly freely, they still eventually come to the rooftops and drink water if we provide them with it. I've observed how cautious these precious birds are while they drink water from the man made pots, they're always alert and ready to be attacked or be scared by a human. No animal would have been scared if it was their natural habitat and they had to drink from a stream or a lake.

I read somewhere that we are disposable and equipped with liquids and minerals to preserve our fading beauty because our charm is only temporary. I often think about it and it makes me wonder that despite being well aware of the fragility of life, man still continues to build empires rising high above our heads and burying us deep down under their shadows. These empires are all I see as I turn my head to gasp some fresh air from my room's terrace. Everywhere I look, I see tangled wires attached to poles, and some being homes to birds, some having torn kites stuck to them. I see how

slowly we're wrapping these wires around ourselves and being stuck in the knots that will slowly suffocate us. The progression we think we are headed to will only get us an expiration date sooner than we expect and our actions will be a cause of deceit.

When I think about the water and the so called preservation we offer, I think about all the huge blue tanks that are fixed on every rooftop in my sight if I get on the roof of my house. I see hundreds of these plastic and fiber containers that are manufactured in different forms and are made with toxic materials that harm the water and gradually get into our bodies leaving behind toxic chemicals that play a vital role in destroying our immune systems to fight pandemics like this, taking out all the green plants that cause it to rain, we store the little water we have left and think that we're keeping it safe.

Similarly, when I decide to look at the other side of the roof, I see these several little factories that are producing products like tiles, wooden products and iron structures. I used to see them every day but I barely noticed the little animals they created with clay and plasters of all kind. These animals are beautified, groomed and then decorated in different spaces; we see them as beautiful things that could put positivity in the world we live in. But at the same time, we take these materials from tearing down their houses and by covering the landscapes with cityscapes, nothing we do is anything right for these creatures.

But let's just not forget the fact that man tries to beautify and organize everything according to his taste. These places are not very organized in terms of their location and the way they process, yet he tries to replicate nature in different forms by destroying it bit by bit. We're creating our own nature by displacing the nature itself. These places that exist in literally every local area I could think of, these are causing harm to us and to the air that flies away.

It made me think that how the man forgets his real job in the race of growth of his ideas, strengths and development. The roads might sound a bit dull and quite right now, used to be so noisy that the traffic sound could be heard in the space. Similarly the noise would affect the life and everything the nature offers in the seas. While

painting beautiful landscapes, idealizing them, one must have realized how impossible is it going to be in some time to find a place like that. I notice that there are a lot of working factories that are open in the middle of residential areas and the products they manufacture, the materials they use and all the toxic fumes and powdered chemicals pollute the air we're breathing in. The presence of these places in such areas is lethal in every way. Thinking about the people who happen to be working in these places, and the amount of toxicity they consume all the time, I wonder why we would dare blame any virus to be destroying our respiration. In the goal of beautifying and organizing the world, we are disturbing and disorganizing the nature in every possible way.

I noticed that it rained in June this time; it is rare and is a good thing that the nature tries to balance out things when we give it a space and leave it on its own for a while. It felt like the men were on a holiday when the nature came in and tried to fix things a bit, but when the factories started to blow smoke out and there was dust in the air again, the nature kept calm, a disappointed calm.

I wonder where things are going; I fear that they'll keep on going like this. One day the man is going to become a bunch of products made to serve humanity, what he wears and what he eats, most of what he obtains damages nature. He will be so caught up in the products built by him for his own comfort that the nature would not be able to heal him, the rain would no longer reach his body directly and that feels so horrible to not be able to feel the rain. It will be our huge houses and tall buildings and plazas that would keep it from raining here. The birds might not longer be able to fly to this place. These tall buildings that bear the weight of the humans and the products of his system are suffocating him from the inside.

We fail to realize that it is nature that heals us truly; being caught up in the race of going ahead is indeed throwing us way back from where it started off. The true healing would always come when there's no damage to the only cure to everything. Preserving medicines in containers and packets that cause more than a half of the diseases in this

world would not fix much part of the damage dealt. We carry the cure we believe in, in something that is the cause of what it might be treating.

I observed that we concentrate so much on keeping ourselves busy when there is a lot around us that we can fix by taking a break. We rely so much on the gadgets we have to serve us all the time. I took time and tried reading directly from the paper rather than a screen and after a long time, it felt different.

I noticed how some people were not serious about the deadly disease that was killing many around the world, but I observed their daily routines too and how they kept things normal for themselves. It might be their intention or they might not be well aware of the risk, but I realized how happy they were while not being able to feel the danger and how 'not knowing' could be a blessing in a way. Unlike the ones I found indoors and worried, they felt free and pure for being outside, under the blue sky with a couple of stars visible. The ones who sit inside the pursuing news, were more terrified with each update.

The man, I wonder, always likes to come out clean. It is easy to jump from one story to another, taking off all the blame from our shoulders and delicately placing it on things around us, things uncontrollable. But life has its strange ways to present man with all the unwanted gifts. So, be it if you say it's because of the world a hundred times, you still have played your part quite well in bringing up this mess upon your heads. Deny all that you want to, but you are suffocating yourself at the hands of discoveries you think you have made, at the expense of the progress you think you have achieved and with the hands of the empires you have build that tower above you and form a palisade wall all around confining you to the cell of the world which is very much similar to the room you are locked down in during this pandemic.

All these things left me wondering if I should really even blame the virus that is told to be lethal, if it is the virus only that was causing people to die. I thought about the letter.

Where do I start? What should I write?

“Dear Covid-19,

You may go back; we are enough to destroy ourselves.

Sincerely,

Arham Bin Asif”