

Quarantine: Far From Home

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It was 8 PM on a rainy night when I, sitting in the hostel mess chewing on tasteless rice, suddenly heard loud thunder. A few minutes later, it was announced that India was entering a complete lockdown, and the panic began. Quarantining in an abandoned campus far from home seemed like a nightmare for some. Would the mess continue to be operational? Would they ask us to evacuate? Would we run out of essential items? I was more annoyed than concerned. To me, it seemed like my senior year was going down the drain. Then reality hit me - I would be trapped within the confines of my hostel for days to come. A clear image of the abandoned campus with furious ninjas and watered-down mess daal started surfacing in my head.

Surprisingly enough, my gloom soon transformed into joy. In a matter of a few days, I realized that uncertainty makes you appreciate those little things which you otherwise tend to ignore. In this time of crisis, the staff and students stuck in the hostels united (while social distancing, of course), and everyone had a hearty time laughing, sharing stories, information, resources, and helping out whenever possible. As the saying goes, when life gives you lemons, make lemonade. But what about when even the lemons are sold out? As much as I am thankful to the mess for their provision of food, the monotonous diet and restrictions on ordering really bought out a Jugaad-Cook in all of us. It only took a nationwide lockdown for us to realize that Maggi is that friend we neglected all this while, but it always has our back in times of crisis.

My final days as a hosteller have become some of the best days of my college life. The drastic drop in pollution made the campus pristine and alluring. With humans in their cages, the animals started

stepping out. The diversity was enthralling, nothing like what I had seen in four years of living here. The overgrown grass, clear skies, brimming animal life, and hustling trees made the campus look like something out of a Ruskin Bond book. I vividly remember that night when Orion, the hunter constellation, was shining bright before my eyes. A soothing song was playing in the background and soft winds were playfully touching my cheeks in an empty OAT. This moment was amongst the most beautiful ones I've experienced on this campus. In this solitude and quiet, I suddenly felt alive and elated.



Why We Stay Up Late: A Millennial's Guide

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At the beginning of the lockdown, we promised ourselves that we'd fix our sleep schedules. However, we still ended up staying up all night, and it got us thinking - what is it about the night that's so attractive? How come our parents live by the adage 'early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise', but our generation finds it increasingly harder to do so?

The answer that your parents will give you is that there's a lot more to do now than there was 30 years ago. If you stayed up late into the night 20 years ago, you could study, read a book, make art, or maybe watch an old VCR on the family television. Now, we have an endless stream of distractions to keep us up. Sometimes the clock slips from PM to AM in a blur of cat videos, Netflix shows, and, if you're lucky, texts from a certain someone. Our thumbs and eyes have already scrolled through miles of content, and yet there is no stopping until we are entirely exhausted. The ever-lasting fear of missing out makes even mindless Instagram scrolling and aimless conversation more attractive than logging out and shutting down, lest we skip over something seemingly significant.



and a welcome feeling of isolation makes it easy to lean back and let our thoughts take over us.

But is that the real reason for our generation's fascination with the after-hours? The way we look at it, nightfall has a certain magic to it that mornings just cannot replicate. In a world whose cogs are continually turning, the emptiness of the night seems like a good chance to slow down and oil them. Post-midnight, everything decelerates and comes to a gradual halt, noises fade from loud sirens to the gentle murmur of the night breeze, and the hours seem to have more minutes. The influence

of the inky night sky with the illustrious moon that it brings along has been romanticized across pop and indie culture. We have movies like *Midnight in Paris*, books like *Midnight's Children*, entire sonnets dedicated to the beauty of the moon, and various passing references in paintings which talk about the mystery and magnificence of the night.

But millennials find the late hours appealing for more reasons than just a poeticized aesthetic, for it is also a chance to reflect and assess the self without external disturbances. When one has no obligation to indulge in needless human interactions, it gives us time to switch off, introspect, and ponder. With stress and anxiety levels on a steady rise, overthinking has taken over us like the plague (too soon?). What better time to overthink than the night? And as the Arctic Monkeys put it, "the nights were mainly made for saying things that you can't say, tomorrow day".

The Blue Bird

N. Krithika, 1st Year, ENE

Have you ever been told,
that Nature's green is gold?
But as the layers of humanity unfold,
The hue seems the hardest to hold.

Glancing outside, I noticed a blue bird
Sitting on a tree,
Something was different, for it had never
looked so carefree.

My stare was stern, but the thoughts did stray,
And I realised that things weren't always this way.
The 'green war' in which all did engage,
Tables have now turned with 'us' in the cage.

As I listened to the blue bird's song,
I wondered, where did things go wrong?
It endured and cognized my pain and misery
For freedom doesn't come for free.

When the destruction seems no bound,
And the wound bleeds, so deep and profound.
Nature seems to take its own course,
Filling the void with regrets and remorse.

Who knows how the world will end?
Is it something for astrologers to comprehend?
Will it be fire or will it be ice?
Portraying the apocalypse as a reluctant sacrifice.

Well the bird has now left the tree,
leaving behind all the pain and agony.
As the bird flies high in the sky, with all its will and courage,
I sit here contemplating in my golden cage.

Add to this the perception of the ever-growing competition in the academic and professional spheres. We are intensely aware of the accomplishments of everyone around us, and this makes us want to accomplish more and more in a single day. If we aren't doing something productive, in the back of our minds we're fretting about not doing something productive. Our ever-growing to-do list eventually bleeds into the night, and every minute spent sleeping feels like time wasted. Just like we don't know when it's time to log out of social media, we don't know how to switch off our work brains.

The cover of the night offers an unparalleled sense of privacy from family and friends alike. In a way, it's a time when we can drop the pretence and be ourselves. Of course, there's also the fleeting sense of rebellion that one gets from not adhering to the social construct of time. Be it thinking about what you could have said differently in an argument or contemplating the varied mysteries of life, the lack of social expectation