


News monitored for: Emami Group

# t2 on Sunday

10 May 2020



#I STAY AT HOME

## SOULITUDE

The lockdown, in a way, has morphed the concepts of time and space and forced us to re-evaluate our 'normal'. *t2oS* hears it from a creative lot *p4-5*

News monitored for: Emami Group

# A BRAVE NEW WORLD

**S**harp at midnight, at the onset of this new decade, I remember being in the middle of a packed dance floor at a 113-year-old social club, a la good ol' Calcutta style. Granted, it was a work day for me but I managed to steal some time away to usher in 2020 with a few close friends — after all, this year and decade were supposed to script the culmination of many of our 20/20 visions. But what the year brought with it, instead, is a redefinition of 'time' and 'space', riding on the back of pestilence — unlike the hackneyed, contentious-yet-aspirational ideas of time and space that had managed to plague a jet-setting, deadline-stricken populace until now.

The lockdown, in many ways, has morphed these ideas and has forced most of us to re-evaluate our 'normal'. The calendar has lost its meaning and it feels like a never-ending tennis match running on a tie-break. For many, infinite trips to the airport have now reduced to a trip to the living room from the bed with a stub of an old boarding pass as a bookmark for that book that you finally have the time to finish — James Joyce's *Ulysses*, maybe? While some of us rely on the familiarity of routines, some have also delved into newer realms to rediscover or hone something within because 'productivity' is subjective. And so could be the notions of living on borrowed time and the confinement of space. I reached out to a few of my favourites, spanning the fields of art, literature, fashion and music to delve into their mindscape...

What does it mean to live with time on loop within a space that is inhibited, instead of letting 'winged fancy roam', for people of the arts? *Anannya Sarkar* finds out

**AATISH TASEER, AUTHOR**

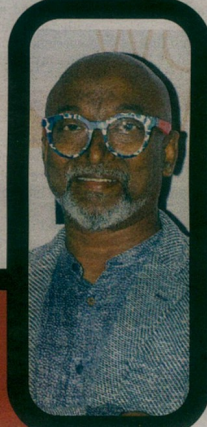
New York distorts time and space anyway — it's an island, very compressed but at the same time, there are tremendous layers to it. Contrary to what people may believe, there is a real sense of neighbourhood here and now, we are confined to the neighbourhood but the city has been emptied out. It does not mean anything to go to the Met or walk past the Public Library anymore — these were my markers and they have been sort of hollowed out of their meanings. So suddenly you have the city to yourself but it also feels reduced because those layers are no longer there. I am a bit nervous as to what 'normal' life will be but I crave little things like I would love to have dinner at a bar, the feeling of a crowded restaurant and I miss the bustle of New York. We are fortunate to live quite near the park so to be able to go for a run in the park and to be able to take the dog out in the morning every day. I am also learning Spanish and spending a few hours a day on it. I write in the mornings and I have been cooking a lot, seriously — things like *nihari* that I never thought I'd cook. A part of the routine hasn't changed much for me but my husband is home nowadays. Some of the books I am reading are *The Silent Woman*: Sylvia Plath and *Ted Hughes* by Janet Malcolm; *The Prophet*: *The Life of Leon Trotsky* by Isaac Deutscher; and a biography of Aldous Huxley.

Picture courtesy: Aatish Taseer

**BOSE KRISHNAMACHARI, ARTIST**

The circumstances are challenging, but I accept them as opportunities to reinvent oneself. Artists like isolation sometimes, while working. These moments in isolation are a good time to ponder about future projects. We have started using online platforms for teleconferencing and having conversations. Auction houses and galleries are also selling their art online. It's an interesting time to be alive, in my opinion. Being with family, playing games, reading cultural news online, pottering about in the garden and helping my better half and making calls to my old friends and mentors keep me occupied. I wake up earlier than others at home, help out with breakfast prep, water the plants and so on. I am also constantly in touch with the Kochi Biennale office team, curatorial team and the curator, Shubigi Rao through online calls. I foresee the days after the lockdown to be vibrant and I look forward to visiting my studio to work again. It will take some time to be back to normal but the unpredictability that awaits will spur me to give my best.

Picture: Emami Art



News monitored for: Emami Group

COVERSTORY

**PRATEEK KUHAD, MUSICIAN**

It's quite a welcome change for me to be honest. I was touring quite intensely all of 2019 so this has been a needed rest — physically. But also creatively, it enables me to breathe and think better. That being said, there are days where a constant lockdown can feel a bit restrictive but I am grateful that I have a home and a family who I am in lockdown with so I really have nothing to complain about.

I think the most important change has been a very consistent routine. In terms of when I wake up, eat and sleep and what I do through the day has become quite homogeneous and it's almost like every day is the same. That's nice in a way because it's in stark contrast to my lifestyle ordinarily.

I wake up at around 8.30am, engage in my morning ritual of making a coffee and having it while I skim the news, check emails/ social media etc. I have two meals a day consistently around 1pm and then around 8pm and then all the time around it is quite flexible.

Sometimes, I'm working on music, recording demos, writing or just generally practising songs. Other times, I could be reading, drawing and taking online classes — it's not fixed but the general idea is to do something productive/creative. I almost always end the night with a movie or a show. I think once normal life resumes, and shows resume, my lifestyle will automatically change on its own — I won't really have to do things differently. But we'll get to that when we do!



alone in this crisis trying to cope and figure it out. Adding structure to my day has been helping me with a new routine and daily ritual of prayer and gratitude. It has changed over the six weeks that I have been home, but nowadays, it involves household chores, cooking, drawing, praying, reading, turning to music and sometimes watching old cinema. Ramadan has begun so these will change again and be shuffled around.

Picture: Experimenter & Ayesha Sultana

**AYESHA SULTANA, ARTIST**

It's a real privilege to be able to stay home, where I have my studio and can 'be productive'. While this was my initial response, part of which was being in shock and denial, as days went by there was a period when I felt very anxious, sad and fearful associated with the pandemic and the current realities of the world in which we're living. I acknowledged what was happening and gave myself space to process, reminding myself that I was not



**PAYAL KHANDWALA, FASHION DESIGNER**

For me personally, time and space are deeply intertwined. I'm the happiest at home with my loved ones and this lockdown has allowed me the luxury of time spent with my family. And given what is happening around us today, that in itself is such a privilege. My lifestyle hasn't changed much, at least with regards to travel. I don't feel a sense of unease being stuck at home and I'm not going stir-crazy, like I know some people are. But so little is in our control anyway that I try to focus on how fortunate I am, given so many have been so terribly inconvenienced and it gives you instant perspective. Trying to socialise my resident cat with our newly adopted rescued puppy and my daughter's online schooling take up most of my time. I have to admit, I'm not trying to cook (I have no interest in it), I'm not trying to workout at home (running around after a hectic pup is enough exercise), I'm not trying to learn a new skill (keeping my sanity under the circumstances counts) and I'm not trying to make plans for the immediate future (seems impossible right now). But when time permits, I try to do some reading and at the end of the day, I'm always happy to watch reruns of

*Seinfeld* for the millionth time. I might have to make my mask a more regular feature of what my daily life looks like. And perhaps once the dust settles, I'll have a new appreciation for simple pleasures that I took for granted, like going to the movies or watching a concert. I suppose it will all depend on what this new normal will be.

**RAGHAVENDRA RATHORE, FASHION DESIGNER**

The lockdown has not only created a special place in our minds in terms of new vocabulary such as 'social distancing' and more, but it has also made us realise the real value of time, a resource that we always took for granted. The frenzy of social media and the slow pace of time at home is at this balance that we all have come to terms with in this new world order. Utilising time wisely is the new trend and what is clear is that we all have become non-complacent with excess time, for a change. My focus has been in upgrading the courses at our design school, The Gurukul School of Design in Jaipur, with nuances of the changing world. Education has the ability to immediately be accessible via online technologies and during this lockdown we all have learnt how to master and tame various different platforms to impart knowledge. In the first half of the day my team and I are investing our resources for the design school and upgrading the relevance of its courses, and in the second half of the day, my core team works with me online, on ongoing projects and new ones in the pipeline. Early evening is the time designated to the family. As a designer, it is in my nature to adapt as the market and customers evolve and a lot will depend on how the 'new world' shapes up but for sure the idea of travelling at a drop of a hat will take some coaxing, as the new norm of online presence might take precedence for some time.



News monitored for: Emami Group



**UJJAWAL DUBEY, FASHION DESIGNER**  
 This time has really centred us and the lines of time and space were blurred but now with time stopping and space being limited, we have the opportunity to analyse what we have been doing and how we have been working. Even with our busy schedules and constant travelling, we weren't moved by these things. What I have realised is that this lockdown has not frustrated us, be it in terms of business or just being stuck in one place. The idea that we are being able to be there for our people, both financially and emotionally, indicates that our ways of running the business was in the right direction because it was never about just the business and always about the people. Adaptation is a very human thing, circumstances change, and one adapts accordingly. As of now, our focus is on surviving these difficult times and helping our people deal with the same. For me, there has been a lot of catching up on sleep. It is a very simple schedule of doing basic things like daily household chores that bring in humility and make us humble. The whole understanding of achievement will change, the meaning of success will change. The way of living life will change. We have always focused on being conscious, but worldwide, this idea of consciousness will evolve.  
 Picture: Ujjawal Dubey

**RAVINDER REDDY, ARTIST**  
 When one is forced to be in a confined space with limited access to the outside world, you look at life more closely and differently and your perspective changes. Things that we would take for granted earlier, we realise, how lucky we are to get them or how little they mean to us actually. I may not be able to work on anything physically at present, but I am very active mentally and am preparing a concept of how relationships get affected due to social distancing. I am getting to look at life from a close quarter and see how relationships are built and how they also disappear. I have also come to comprehend that we need so little to endure life. The lockdown has taught us one thing, that is how to be patient. It is required for mankind's survival.  
 Picture: Emami Art

**SAHIL MAIK, ARTIST**  
 The first thing this lockdown did is it made us aware of our extreme privilege, our complicity and lack of action. I am not thinking about work. This reckless breaking down and shutting of systems by the government and them consistently failing the most vulnerable is unsettling. In Goa, and particularly in my village of Kavlem, several supply and care groups have been formed and I am involved with one of these, so I spend the morning at the outreach centre. The rest of the day involves house-work and finally some reading. I don't have a clear answer yet to what I would do differently when the lockdown is lifted. But I do feel that we must continue to strengthen economic and care-based systems for the communities that we are involved with though. It is urgent and we should have done this all along.

**TARUN BALANI, MUSICIAN**  
 Slowing down, for me, is a heightened sense of awareness and acknowledgement of the present moment. Sometimes we make ourselves believe that we're 'busy', to avoid our own thoughts and feelings but when we're in complete isolation, then one can really hear what's going on within us. This process has taught me to be resilient, more aware and better understand my mental health. Mostly I am trying to maintain a similar routine that I had prior to the lockdown. I am making sure that I am interacting with my family and friends every day via Skype, FaceTime and phone calls. I am also continuing my creative process, teaching, practising and writing every day. I most definitely won't be taking the opportunities I've had to be able to perform live, for granted. It is truly a privilege to be able to share and perform live, and cannot wait to get back on stage.  
 Picture: Tarun Balani