It was Easter 2020 morning. The telephone rang. A familiar tender and sweet little voice came from the other end, hurriedly wishing “Happy Colona” (sic) before the parents could grab the phone from the child. The recipient of the call was taken aback at least for a while by the unanticipated ‘corona wish’ contrary to an expected ‘Happy Easter’ wish. What kind of a wish could that be? Could it have been an accidental mistake or slip of the tongue? Quite possible! The little one perhaps got confused and mixed up things after having listened to the passion narratives and the narratives of coronavirus victims from parents as well as through media? Both explained simultaneously, during the season of Lent, presumably sounded awful for the child. But the little child is too small to evaluate both stories and place the corona story above the passion narrative resulting in a ‘happy corona’ wish. Did the child really understand that the one who was crucified and buried has also resurrected, which the Easter is all about? No idea. There were many questions in mind but no convincing answers.

However, the fact that the child repeated the same wish (happy corona instead of happy Easter) made the recipient turn in a different direction. Was it not the corona that at last facilitated the parents to spend quality time with the child and without stress? Was it not the corona that enabled the parents to work from home providing ample time for them to leisurely feed him, play with him and also take care of him? Yes, that hypothesis stands a better chance of approval.

With the coronavirus-motif zoomed to the maximum on the canvas, other themes have apparently taken a back seat in the global news. Whether we turn on the radio or television, skim through newspapers, there is relatively less and less news shared apart from that of an alarming widespread of Covid-19 and the mounting mortality graph. Day in and day out, fear of imminent loss and fading hopes of a rapid recovery obsess the old and the young alike.

However, in the midst of such anxious moments positive stories have also emerged. They are stories from families where parents and children could have at hand envious and relaxed moments of sharing, caring and fun together. Such encouraging stories come from some segments of societies. These are real stories of people put to unending suffering and lifelong dehumanizing treatment. Now the tables have been turned on them. There is a reversal of the dominant order. At least on record we have government instructions not to cut the salaries of those who lost their jobs (employees in unorganized sectors) because of the lockdown, and not to vacate people from their rental facilities stating reasons of non-payment of rent.
The report of an unprecedented low pollution graph in major cities is promising news indeed. The news of relatively unpolled water in many water bodies across the globe is encouraging. The fearless roaming of wild animals through the broadways and highways in broad daylight is unheard of anytime in the recent past but is now a reality. That crime rate is at its lowest ever in some countries is heartening.

If news bulletins from the state of Kerala, India are to be believed, there are thousands of Community Kitchens in place across the state. Several thousands of young people have registered as volunteers with readiness to help and serve the people in quarantine and in medical isolations. Many schools, hospitals, churches, mosques and even railway coaches have been converted into quarantine centres and medical isolation units in the event of an uncontrollable social spread of the pandemic. Star hotels, restaurants and private hospitals have offered their facilities towards service of the corona patients. Public servants irrespective of the social strata or employment category have come forward offering a month’s salary to tide over the crisis. Food cooked in the community kitchens is packed and kept ready to be taken away by the corona suspected or corona infected people. There is also provision for home delivery of food.

Dozens of overseas guests, and among them some senior citizens of advanced age, trapped in the state during the lockdown period and were in serious condition, were completely healed of the coronavirus infection. They returned to their respective countries profusely thanking the state for the treatment and the warm hospitality provided. Thousands of guest labourers (internal migrant workers from different states of the country) who lost their jobs with the announcement of the lockdown in the country are accommodated and fed by the state. The free rationing of essential food items to the needy is now possible with the state government rising to the occasion and opening the state-owned storehouses of food-grains at this critical juncture. The government has declared a moratorium on all recovery action against loan-defaulters. For the first time in history the chief minister of a state briefs the media and press on a daily basis and also takes up questions.

As the world looks forward to the pressing of the reset button for an early return to ‘normalcy’ we wish and pray that the new ‘normal’ will not be like new wine in the old jar. Let us hope for a transformed world taking its cue from the creativity, commitment and emerging feel good factor in such an extraordinary situation.

It sounds incredible and the little innocent child’s Easter wish with “Happy Corona” has been vindicated.

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