

New life amidst a threat to all life

Easter in retrospect

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Last year, suffering and death struck with the arrival of Easter, to plunge us back into Good Friday. Thousands who lost loved ones and limbs were shattered by this senseless violence. Many of them still continue in search of Easter life, submerged in the agony and questions of Good Friday.

This year we kept Easter, in the inescapable atmosphere of Good Friday. As deaths caused by the virus pile up world-wide, bodies of loved ones are disposed of clinically, governments enforce unprecedented measures to segregate individuals and communities and struggle to keep their economies afloat at the same time, public health systems and medical personnel reach breaking point, and our own nation faces up to grim health, economic and political uncertainties, the lesson is clear.

Easter includes Good Friday

Regardless of the sequence in the Christian calendar, the harsh realities of Good Friday neither precede nor exit at Easter. Neither does Easter displace these Good Friday realities. Just as Christ's post-resurrection body carried the marks of torture inflicted before death, any credible affirmation of Easter is to be accompanied with the vulnerability and pain of Good Friday.

This understanding of Easter has a message for our world. Our aspirations for advancement and a better quality of life cannot be separated from human vulnerability and pain.

Prosperity Indulgence

Dominant global trends over recent history have nevertheless attempted to do exactly this; build a culture of 'Prosperity Indulgence', backed by an associate combination of unbridled pleasure and profits that shuts out the signs and indicators of vulnerability and pain.

'Prosperity Indulgence' works best however when two arrangements are in place. First, a more pretentious type of social distancing, effectively excludes those whose whole lives carry the marks of vulnerability and pain and next, a blending of glamour, achievement and privacy is cultivated to smother personal vulnerability and pain.

Within this fortress however, some space is provided to accommodate the indispensable vulnerable. These are the ones who build our roads and service our amenities, drive our buses and deliver food at our doorstep, cook for us, serve at tables, maintain our gardens, clean our houses, replenish the super market shelves and wear the faded orange vest; symbols of fading human machines who clean and beautify our streets.

The other face of Covid 19

Ironically, the other face of the virus has slowly begun to dislodge these false assumptions behind Prosperity

Indulgence. In a matter of some of the most traumatic months our generation has known, it has achieved what organized protests and advocacy, strikes and rebellions, have not been able to achieve over decades. Striking indiscriminately among both the chosen and excluded, it has slowly begun to dismantle the foundations of Prosperity Indulgence and forcefully bring the plight of human vulnerability to the attention of the whole world. Faced with death and uncertainty that neither the wealth-industry nor war-industry can resolve in their characteristic aggressive styles, the world is being slowly jolted to its senses. As governments and societies, brazenly indifferent to the suffering and injustice of their human neighbor, now awoken to the myth that some can prosper by abandoning others, unprecedented measures to redistribute economic and health resources are beginning to fall into place. In their diverse approaches to the crisis, governments and societies agree on one principle; to save one we are to strive to save all. Vulnerability and pain can be no longer be ignored or marginalized. These realities are to temper and redefine our understanding of human advancement.

This shift however welcome, is not adequate to deliver the long term social justice and stability our World aches for. There is every possibility we will be forced back to our polarized positions after the storm is over; such is the power of human craving that the Buddha warned us about. If these benefits of economic and health security are therefore to be consolidated into life giving trends, as they must, we are to

rediscover and build on the transforming energy of our universal human values.

Life-giving values

Fortunately a global resurgence of these values also emerged with the virus-crisis. As medical and administrative professionals along with undervalued workers alike, demonstrated unstinted acts of sacrifice and loving kindness in the service of neighbor, with no interest in extra payment or profits, we received a substantial endorsement of the higher quality of life available to us. These values often considered too soft for a world of tough transactions, finally turned out to be the front line resistance to the unprecedented crisis and exposed the helplessness of 'Prosperity Indulgence' to save us in the toughest crisis of all. If cherished and cultivated, these values will carry us through the current virus-crisis and go further to influence a more just social order, grounded in our common human vulnerability and wiser to the perils of 'Prosperity Indulgence'.

Conclusion

A sinister virus presses us to acknowledge our shared human vulnerability and embrace the time tested values that make us truly human. These changes have potential to dismantle an expanding system of unbounded greed and replace it with a new, social order.

This unexpected impact of the virus also opens a window to the true nature of Easter. The new life of Easter is never meant to be distinct from the rest of life. Neither is it a

privileged religious experience for some people of religion. It is rather a human responsibility that rises out of the life threatening experiences of our common life; evidenced in human mutuality. When people include the other and give of themselves for the betterment and growth of the other, a new humanity evolves. It is in this transformation and transition that the promise of Easter flourishes and is to be discerned.

With peace and blessings to all