

2020 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

## **Metamorphosis**

(Original)

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Dear Aman,

I am writing to you from the year 2030. I only have the privilege to construct this one message, and I am restricted to reveal some information about the future— we don't exploit this novel communication technology. I'll tell you everything you can know.

You and the world are going through a difficult time right now. COVID-19 might cause you to worry. You might think the world economy is weak to unexpected natural forces, which will lead to a precarious future. However, many experts in my time agree that COVID-19 was the most transformative event of the decade; it was a metamorphosis.

You couldn't go out, you couldn't meet friends, and you couldn't fly home to family. You were in a cocoon. But I want you to reflect. You had all your material possessions with you, yet it was the most frustrating time to live in. Our lives revolved around our possessions until we discovered the truth: the things we obtain without money— family, friendship, and freedom— are most valuable.

COVID-19 gave us a second chance to be grateful for what we have. It gave a second chance to those with prejudices to forget differences; it gave a second chance to those who weren't close to their families; it gave a second chance to those who were too busy to care about others. It was the world's "gestation" period— an opportunity to metamorphose into a world with spirit and soul.

While there was an effort to nourish Earth during your time, we were half-heartedly committed and took her for granted. You often neglected to recycle plastic bottles or bags, and you insouciantly used plastic straws. But today, the default is renewability. Visiting Shanghai last year for a conference about philanthropic entrepreneurship, I didn't see any black smoke spewing out of factories, and I saw windmills and solar panels left and right. I could tell the residents were proud of it. The world used its second chance.

On another trip, I volunteered to teach in Sudan. For two months, I resided in one of the several new, non-profit schools that provided sanitation and food for students and their parents. Understanding the lives of the underprivileged changed me. One fifteen-year-old girl, Alia, told me about her life before this school was available for her. Her single mother worked as a cleaner for eighteen hours a day to feed Alia and her brother, while they would spend the day doing chores around the neighbourhood in exchange for some bread. But, her tears, which accompanied her lugubrious story, soon expressed ineffable happiness as she smiled— thinking about how much her life has changed. The classroom was inspiring: the students' past hardships gave them an insatiable thirst for opportunities to improve themselves and the world.

I know you were keen to become a business analyst or engineer, but you'll be happiest working for a non-profit organization. I am the head of operations and a curriculum developer. Our company remotely educates children through a network of classrooms in third-world countries. I feel lucky that the job market has shifted to focus on high-impact social work; my life, and my colleagues' lives, feel meaningful.

I'm also married now. I met her at a green-technology engineering competition. She's a designer of robots that are sent to developing countries to advance their manufacturing and service sectors. We reside in an apartment building in San Francisco, living stress-free lifestyles with easy schedules— perhaps because our jobs don't feel like work. I think our lives represent those of most people today, as the advent of online job platforms has enabled us to do what we love. People are happier today. I feel it around me.

My present— your future— still needs to be created by you and everyone else. You have the choice to break free from the COVID-19 cocoon by growing with the knowledge of self, or you can remain therein for eternity— and complain about the problem that you're a part of. Empower others with the awareness of this choice; empower others, as James Allen once advised, to strive against their own selfishness.

Keep going,  
Aman, 2030