Year 1 AC (After Coronavirus)
Pan India Online Essay Contest 2020

Essay Topic: Learning at Home during Lockdown: My Parents and My Teachers

Ever since the lockdown started, I feel lonely at home.

I do have a brother but soon realized that talking to a person or doing the same thing consistently can get monotonous. Sometimes, I even feel that it would be better to go to school, which a month-back I could not have thought of in a million years.

At my house, both my parents are doctors. Not that they do not have holidays, they do! Somehow, the holidays do not seem enough.

My parents are treating COVID-19 patients and often discuss their healthcare. At times, I find their conversations scary and mom calms me down by saying this will end soon. Yet, I am hardly convinced with her explanations. In the little time that I get to talk to my friends, we discuss the current situation due to pandemic and its advantages, especially on the environment, as us human beings are in lockdown.

A few days ago, when my father and I were sitting in the balcony at night I looked up in the sky and saw a lot more stars than I usually get to see. Even my mom told me that Yamuna river is getting cleaner amidst the lockdown.

I also feel that my friends have their parents at home, spending quality time with them and all having fun times, together. While they have fun, my parents are at the hospital treating patients and, of course, this is something that makes me very proud. Still, it is not the same as having them at home.

However, the advantage of not having parents at home is that I do not have to do any work until they are back. A few weeks ago, I panicked thinking that I would not get to celebrate my birthday on its due date, just as it was not celebrated the previous three consecutive years on the birthday day, since my parents were busy treating patients of either typhoid, pneumonia or dengue. A sigh of relief, this year it does not matter that much as long as my family and I are safe.
I am also anxious about school; I hope that they do not take away our summer holidays to make up for the missed school days. I always enjoyed attending Bharatanatyam dance classes but now, due to the lockdown, we have these classes on Zoom, which I can only imagine, must be hard for the teacher as she tries to make it look effortless. These classes, on the other hand, do us some good, as we do not get to copy someone if we need to.

On weekdays the school gives us work, which I sometimes find overwhelming, but it is more work on their side, so that is impressive. Another thing I like is the kind of effort the teachers are making to teach us by newer methods like making videos of concepts and even dance steps, so hats off to them for that!

On days when we do have homework, my parents when home check it, which is good because after the tiring day at work they still spend time with us.

Out of the many things I have learned during the lockdown, one main thing is that my parents keep reminding through their example that we should keep hope and stay positive.
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Essay Topic: What will be the role of young people in addressing the crisis caused by the pandemic and related issues, such as new balances in power, raising inequalities and reduced employment opportunities?

“It is not possible for civilization to flow backwards, while there is youth in the world”.

Helen Keller

Today, a virus has spread turmoil in the world.

It has made us realize how shallow the materialistic pleasures are in life and preeminent, the life itself. Before this, people in the world believed that the cardinal was the jobs they were doing, the places visited, the cars owned or the clothes worn. Most of all, the younger generations fall in this trap of creating a virtual reality for themselves while there is a war going on in the world, there is a sudden spur of radical nationalism in the country, or the forests are on fire. All that matters to most of the youth is the social life they are maintaining. Even after all of this, one cannot deny that young people are the drivers of change. They are the ones who shape the future. Time and again, it has been proven that whenever the world was in shackles, youth used to come forward, took charge and changed the course of history. Be it Malala Yousafzai, who took a bullet through her head to fight for educating women in Pakistan, and become an inspiration for millions of women around the globe who were denied their rights. Mark Zuckerberg, who established that it is not necessary to be 50 to build something as huge as Facebook or, be it someone as young as Greta Thunberg who protested in front of the Swedish Parliament building, giving rise to worldwide concentration on environmental issues like Global Warming.

Who would have thought that a mutant virus could crash the world economies and result in all people being locked up inside their homes? Yet, here we are, in this situation. It is time for young people to come forward and take charge. It is necessary to understand here that the enemy is invisible, it cannot be fought and it cannot be tamed. So how do we fight with an enemy like that? The answer is simple: by being prepared, by being sensitive, by becoming aware. The youth needs to focus on things that they were already doing before the..
pandemic and how they can improve in their jobs to help the world regain what it has lost. Once normalcy is established, the world is going to face another crisis, which is going to be as challenging as this one if not more. A crisis wherein we face a lack of resources like decreasing groundwater levels, as well as a fall in economy like stock markets crashing, small businesses being vulnerable and high rise in unemployment rates. According to a study by the ILO, almost 25 million jobs could be lost due to COVID-19. As the youth is the biggest part of our workforce, everyone doing their part with utmost honesty and with a view of catering to others is going to be of utmost help in a situation like this.

Everyday life has been disturbed because of COVID-19 and the whole world is at a halt. When we look at the present situation, every person is confined to their own homes. The billions of dollars that we have invested in real estate are of no use at this time because we spent money on building fancy facades, ornate landscapes, tall structures, and posh amenities, but all we are doing now is staying indoors, and our houses are not efficient enough. Architects and builders have left us with inflexible spaces; our houses are neither well ventilated nor well lit with natural lighting. We are confined within compact and non-workable spaces. Had the designers paid more attention to these things, we would have had some comfort, workability and exposure to the outer world while staying inside. This is just one example of how we have failed as professionals in doing our jobs.

We need designers, professionals, business people and workers who bring a creative approach in doing traditional work and this responsibility lies on the shoulders of the youth. We cannot dismiss the consequences of this pandemic. Hence, if each young person focuses on working with more empathy and dedication in their work, the world will soon be able to recover from the inevitable losses that it is going to bear.
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Essay Topic: Science and health: what should we change to be more resilient?

My eyes get moist for my country to witness the coronavirus outbreak.

Why it should not be? This pandemic showed some sad moments, which even my grandparents did not experience in their lifetime. The science and technology is highly advanced but until today, the whole world failed to find a permanent cure for COVID-19, which was first identified in Wuhan, China.

This coronavirus gives us an infectious and acute respiratory disease, more contagious than chicken pox. Unfortunately, those who had this disease are discriminated in the society.

This global pandemic has told us that nature is supreme power. Before this pandemic, I had heard many countries claiming that they are the most authoritative in the world. This epidemic has told the whole world that no country in the world is fully developed in social, economic, scientific and technological terms. They all still need to grow; develop at least until an extent where they would be able to find a cure for COVID-19.

Life stopped during this pandemic not only in China and India, but also across the globe. This is a time for countries not to brawl or quarrel about the origin of this disease. This is a time to stand in solidarity with each other to discover a permanent cure for the pandemic. Still, the divergences of different countries are clear. It seems most comfortable for us humans to impose blame on others, but we should put a halt to this approach.

Is this pandemic extremely painful and life-threatening? Yes, of course it is. This disease, which is said to be disastrous, gave a halt to the world and taught the humans how to be more resilient. It made us realize that life is not a race. It taught us the importance of our families, the importance of life over our ambitions.

Now, the questions are– How to be more resilient? How to be saved from this disease? Nobody had the answer to these questions. The most dangerous thing was that whoever
had the infection from within, would not have known it initially, and by the time it was found out, he would not have known how many more people he had infected by that time.

After the outbreak, many studies revealed that this disease was spreading from human to human but originated from an animal strain yet to be confirmed. To stop the infection many guidelines by the government were laid.

These are:
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds after touching any surface
- Cover your mouth while sneezing and coughing
- Maintain social distancing and for this most of the world is locked down

Other thoughts have also surfaced: maybe these types of diseases are caused by eating non-vegetarian food? We were also advised to avoid shaking hands and follow our own Indian greeting, i.e. Namaste. That is why I bow to the culture of my country and always pledge to follow it.

Throughout the world, India’s culture has once again proved that why its ideologies are so important?

So much COVID-19 havoc has taught us.
The world is facing coronavirus pandemic, which is enormous and dangerous. It is one of the deadliest crises the world has faced over the years. The virus has set its foot in nearly 210 countries around the world. This invisible virus has taken numerous innocent lives and there is no stop to it. Meanwhile, many have even recovered from the deadly virus.

In this trying and testing times, the world should come together as a ‘global village,’ and we should empathize with each other. We should abide by our government rules and regulations and especially stay indoors during the lockdown as then only will be able to contribute in containing the pandemic.

However, what we are witnessing at most places is the complete opposite of empathy and solidarity.

In several countries, Chinese nationals’ and people of Asian descent face xenophobic attacks worldwide due to the coronavirus pandemic. There is an increase in the number of cases reported of hostility and discrimination. In India too, ‘Chinese-looking’ Indians are targeted in racist attacks. Recently, a woman from Manipur alleged that a man spat on her and called her ‘Corona’ in Delhi.

This heinous and awful act is not only proof of racism but also highlights the enormity of hate imbibed in some people’s minds. In another incident, an Asian woman was harassed in Australia. It is an unfortunate reality that racism against people of Asian descent has reached a peak amidst the pandemic outbreak. Acts of kindness and empathy tie us together but incidents like these put a stain on society and tear our unity apart.

However, on a brighter side, people across the world are expressing their gratitude uniquely towards frontline workers like doctors, nurses, police personnel, and many others.
They are working day and night, and risking their lives in an attempt to save us all. Acts like these are what bind us together and prove that good wins over evil, after all.

The coronavirus has been referred as the ‘Chinese Virus’ by people in power. By racially profiling the virus, Chinese people become more vulnerable and at risk of being targeted and harassed. Furthermore, it increases the already imbibed xenophobia in some people’s minds.

In my opinion, world leaders should be aware and cautious in the way they speak and what they say. A leader is supposed to show their followers the morally correct path and not vice-versa. In crucial times like these, every word they say holds the utmost value and regard.

Times like these are also showing the prejudice and utterly wrong beliefs held in people’s mind. In some places, doctors and nurses are being evicted by their landlords on an ignorant pretext that they may spread the coronavirus. Although the State Government is taking stern measures against such landlords, it does not help a lot in erasing the deep anguish caused to those doctors and nurses.

We need each others’ support more than ever. Instead of pitting one community against the other, we should pledge solidarity and support. I believe we can come out of this pandemic more improved than ever only when all of us collectively act responsibly. This is where the role of the media holds the utmost importance. We need responsible sources who provide authentic information. News outlets in a diverse country like India should refrain from pitting people and communities against each other. News outlets should not communalize this sensitive issue when everything is already too fragile.

Society can prosper when the leaders and the people propagate kindness against hate and solidarity against ignorance.

It is only then we can defeat this pandemic.
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Essay Topic: The lockdown affected men and women equally. At home, it also forced them for instance to share household chores. Do you believe this crisis will have long-lasting consequences on gender roles and stereotypes in the country?

In the opening verse of the famous poem Soundarya Lahari, Ananda Lahiri ("Wave of Beauty, Wave of Bliss"), written by Indian culture’s great poet, Adi Shankaracharya; he depicts the holy union of God Shiva and Goddess Shakti, emphasizing that Shiva is powerless and incomplete without Shakti in all respects.

“O Bhagwati, Only if Shiva is conjoined with You can He create Without You, O Shakti, He cannot even move O, Mother, Hari, Hara and Brahma worship You.”

Our mythology and philosophy have always supported gender equality, but owing to our stereotypes and prejudice, we have lost the grounds of fairness and defined certain unfair norms for women. Our preconceived notions and mental blockages have led to the confinement of women in the jungle of patriarchy.

History is evidence to show that we have always evolved and learned from our mistakes after every catastrophic event. For example, with the spread of the Spanish flu in 1918, women had taken an active part in public roles, thus creating a new wave of freedom and economic activity. It caused women to enter the workforce and be on an equal footing with their male counterparts. If a pandemic during World War could cause such a profound impact on gender roles, then a pandemic in today’s modern world has even more significant potential to set the house in order. This will help us in breaking away from the chains of gender disparity.

With the spread of the coronavirus, human life has been disrupted both on social and economic grounds. With the economics of the entire world in jeopardy, a new social and economic order is on the horizon where men and women are treated equally. The Coronavirus pandemic is the opportunity to regain the lost ground of humanity and enjoy a new normal in life after the Corona.
Quarantine measures and prolonged lockdowns have brought in a sense of belongingness in men towards home and family. This gives women not only the time to rejuvenate themselves and take a break from household routine, but it also encourages them to utilize their time effectively and follow their dreams.

Moreover, fighting against the coronavirus requires gender parity on all grounds, be it on a professional level, home care activities, or pursuing online economic activities to feed the family. With women being the major caregivers at home, they are a crucial link in fighting the pandemic.

A new era of gender equality after the coronavirus requires not just the sharing of home and family responsibility between men and women, it also calls for more work and education opportunities for women and the breaking of mental blockages. Provision of work from home and video conferencing has taught us how to accommodate the needs of women while ensuring that they pursue their career goals. Allowing such flexibility will provide women an opportunity to be socially and financially independent.

During the lockdown, the cases of domestic violence against women have increased. More than 92,000 calls were received, asking for protection from abuse and violence in the initial 11 days of lockdown. This highlights that women are facing two pandemics at the same time- the Coronavirus and domestic abuse. It is high time to ensure that men and women are entitled to equally physical and emotional well-being. This calls for active participation on the part of each member of the nation- be it the government, local community, individuals, help groups, businesses, etc. Availability of help at the right time and in a cost-effective manner is the pre-requisites to ensure that men and women are safe. Redefining economic, educational and social opportunities is need of the hour. Breaking away the existing social norms and preaching equality using our scriptures and education can play a crucial role in bringing a new era of parity. We need to ensure that the positive change sustains forever.

Fighting against the coronavirus is not just about flattening the corona infected population curve; it is also about ensuring that humanity comes out victorious and realizing that every Shiva is powerless without Shakti.