

Thoughts on Vietnamese Psyche after Covid-19

Discussing the Vietnamese psyche after Covid-19 is a way to show our optimism that Covid-19 will reach its peak and come to an end soon, allowing humanity an early return to its usual life, which does not necessarily mean peaceful existence!



Some thoughts as Vietnam recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic

We cannot just hope to return to a peaceful life after the pandemic, because life was never truly peaceful before. More importantly, the pandemic is unprecedented and the psyche of Vietnam and other nations has been transformed in two ways. Firstly, there is the emergence of new trauma, such as increased feelings of powerlessness and loneliness and, secondly, it marks the beginning of rethinking many things that previously seemed immutable and required little thought. Re-evaluating our lives will now become a proactive psychological trend and it is conceivable that we will now consider the following factors much differently:

Firstly, we accept the fact that humanity is perfectly empowered to change the world for the better. For example, even though we were born without wings, we have since been manufacturing airplanes and rockets to fly high and conquer the vastness of space. Although we still believe that a Covid-19 vaccine will emerge, we must now reconsider how harshly humankind has treated our environment already.

In reality, on several previous occasions, we have been reminded of that already and, in 2009, the United Nations declared that April 22 would become the annual Mother Earth Day. Earth Day rhymes with birthday, no wordplay, but the message is that it is vital to now protect our planet's ecosystem more carefully!

Secondly, human-beings can now live completely virtual lives online, without need for direct interaction with others. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Vietnamese discovered even more about the advantages of cyberspace. During the days of social distancing, students could not go to school but could still study online. Consumers who could not go out shopping could still have their goods delivered at home.

Actually, this could all be seen before the pandemic, when the smartphone took over and, worldwide, users rapidly developed the habit of depending on them to immerse themselves into their own little worlds.

However, because of the new social distancing rules, we more than ever feel the vital need for real human interaction. In meetings, wearing facemasks, a meter or two apart, we feel awkward and suddenly reconsider the lost opportunities in the past to wholeheartedly communicate with others, without those restrictions.

Evaluating online classes during the pandemic, poet Tan Hoai Da Vu warned about the shortcomings of online studies, in his usual sensitive and artistic style: *“Students will tend to study on their own but will not be able to find everything they need. As a result, their communication skills will suffer and university life will slowly become less communal. Lecturers will be unable to pour all their love and their personalities into their work, shape those of their students, set good examples or transmit the proper human values to them.”*

Thirdly is social equality in medicine. During the pandemic, we came to understand very clearly that the virus does not discriminate and is contracted by inhaling droplets directly from others or indirectly through contact with contaminated surfaces, regardless of whether this person is rich or poor, young or old. Covid-19 does not discriminate, but Covid-19 treatment does.

On April 17, 2020, an article demonstrated this discrimination at work in the US, certainly not the only country involved: *“With 600,000 infections and 30,000 deaths, the US has become the most heavily impacted country in the world. In this situation, no-one would think that the first question on an American patient's mind would be how to pay for treatment. But this happened in New York City, the most heavily infected location. Before a patient was brought to intensive care and connected to a ventilator, he asked his nurse, “Who's going to pay for it?” Those were his last words, according to Derrick Smith, an anesthetist at the hospital.”*

On the contrary, the Vietnamese believe that medical insurance ensures social equality in medicine for some. However, after the pandemic experience of looking after loved ones, Vietnam may rethink this issue. With death on the doorstep, only one decision needs to be made. If the case is severe, the patient will get an invasive ventilator, if the case is less severe, they will make do with a noninvasive ventilator, whether or not they bought insurance and regardless of its coverage limitations.

Bui Van Tieng

Chairman of the Danang Association of Historical Sciences

(Media Center)