

Continue without a pause

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Hello, fellow IIScians!

We all are connected by some shared experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that you all are returning to our paradise campus, I cannot wait to meet you all. To make this process a little fun and exciting, I am sharing my quarantine experience here. Truth be told, this time has provided me a long-awaited solace.

I touched down in Bengaluru on 13th March 2020. In a conversation with a fellow traveler, which started with a humble “Namaste”, he shared with me a lovely quote by William Bennett while anticipating the isolation days: “Home is a shelter from storms, all sorts of storms”. Mentally, I was ready for this radical change that was about to come my way.....the QUARANTINE! (I guess watching Contagion and Pandemic excited me). I already had my essentials: Laptop, Kindle, mobile.... Netflix, Hotstar, and Amazon Prime.

My quarantine room in the student guest house was clean and tidy. It took me about two days to overcome the jet lag. On the very first day, I told myself that this is a bonus time which I may never get again. So, I quickly wrote down the things that I wanted to do. My mornings would start at 5 AM with a workout session (I liked this YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChVRfsT_ASBZk10o0An7Ucg), followed by a long warm refreshing bath. Breakfast would arrive by 7:45 AM. Until lunchtime, I would read my book followed by some series watching. I liked working in the evenings with small breaks for snacks and dinner.

The first three days went smoothly. After a while, I thought I had reached my nadir and would fail to complete the things that I wished to do in a day. Anxiety and frustration started building up. I started getting constant thoughts about how an invisible creature has made the world panicky and topsy-turvy. So, I re-calibrated my day with a new goal: I wanted to understand SARS-CoV-2. This helped me to further appreciate biology and I also learned a lot.

A relative of mine, who was also in quarantine suggested learning a new language on the Duolingo app. I started taking French lessons on it. To foster my interest, I watched a beautiful French movie, Amélie. The quarantine time brought together my stranded cousins and school friends. We had innumerable zoom calls and WhatsApp video calls, which created a nostalgic whirlpool.

Throughout the quarantine period and even now Prof. Dipshikha Chakravorty, mess staff, and the health center staff provided immense support. This gave me a lot of assurance that I am being taken care of and am not alone. My 80-year-old grandmother in Goa started a book

club. She also stitched cloth masks and distributed them in her locality. This inspired me a lot since I found her more active than ever. I reminisced the quarantine days with my new friend in quarantine, Dipali Sonawane from the Materials Engineering department who was also housed in the guest house for 14 days. While the pandemic seemed like a big pause in our academic life, the Gulhomar bloom in IISc, thunderstorms in Bengaluru, waterfilled corridors in NGH continued without a pause.

By the end of my 14 days quarantine, I communicated a paper, read two wonderful books: Durbar by Tavleen Singh and Savarkar by Vikram Sampath. I even watched some amazing shows: Caliphate (Netflix), Special ops (Hotstar), and Family Man (Amazon Prime).

I am listing some tips I gathered from my quarantine experience which you may find useful:

1. Try to avoid sitting in one place as much as possible. If you are on a call, walk around in your room. Trust me, this will keep you active.
2. List down your favorite things: reading, writing, painting, dancing; decide beforehand what you would like to do in your hostel room. Also, if possible, go for something new: like I am trying to learn French.
3. Maintain a quarantine diary.
4. Stay hydrated and try to work out at your preferable time of the day
5. Follow a schedule: best would be to rise early and sleep early.
6. Do not worry about your work or going to the lab. On the 15th day, you will do that.
7. Avoid talking with negative people. This is very important!
8. In case of doubt or any requirements, contact the institute COVID-19 team.
9. Spend your mornings on your balcony. Do not avoid baths just because you are quarantined. This will make you lazy and pull down your spirits.
10. And lastly, follow all the rules diligently. This is the only way to keep yourself and the IISc community protected from the virus.

À bientôt! (See you soon)