

## **Belletristic to the Rescue: Transforming Crisis into Creativity in the Himalayan Foothills**

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**Abstract.** The article delves into the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on society, education and literature, with a specific focus on the experiences and initiatives of the Literature Department at Shoolini University in Himachal Pradesh, India. It explores the paradoxical nature of the pandemic as both a malevolent force and a catalyst for change. The article discusses the challenges posed by the pandemic, including fear-induced psychosis, domestic conflicts and economic hardships, while also highlighting the importance of adaptability in the face of unprecedented adversity. As a case study, the article describes how Shoolini University's Literature Department responded to the crisis by organising a series of online literary gatherings, symposia and conferences, fostering connections and providing solace to individuals grappling with the isolation of lockdowns. They also detail the publication of an anthology titled *Covid's Metamorphosis: Stories of our Corona Times*, which captures the diverse experiences of individuals during the pandemic. Furthermore, the article explores the shifting landscape of education and pedagogy, emphasising the need for innovative approaches in the post-COVID era. It discusses the integration of practices like yoga and meditation into the curriculum to support holistic well-being and psychological resilience, reflects on the transformative nature of the pandemic, likening it to a tsunami of change and underscores the importance of adaptability, compassion and holistic education in navigating the challenges of the post-pandemic world.

**Keywords and phrases:** COVID-19 pandemic, transforming education, adaptability, holistic well-being, isolation of lockdowns

## **Introduction**

The well-worn adage, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going”, may hold clichéd undertones, yet its validity has been repeatedly demonstrated. Undoubtedly, humanity has gleaned unprecedented lessons over the three years of coronavirus. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that preceding generations throughout numerous centuries have also weathered arduous times and assimilated their own wisdom. Comparable to the inhabitants of the 21st century, individuals in earlier times confronted calamities head-on and embraced paradigm shifts when circumstances necessitated. For contemporary society, the COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be an instructive experience, simultaneously dismantling established modes of existence, cognitive frameworks and comprehension of the human condition. Upon retrospective examination of the various strategies employed to surmount the encountered challenges, one is confronted with a paradox: Has the pandemic, with its attendant traumas, served as a malevolent force or a beneficial catalyst? Have we been fundamentally transformed, in Yeatsian terms, as we witness the emergence of a “terrible beauty”? (“Easter, 1916”, 1920).

Directing attention to the Indian context, a brief elucidation of the pandemic’s abrupt onset and the subsequent reactions evoked at individual and collective levels becomes necessary. These reactions encompassed a pervasive fear-induced psychosis that permeated personal relationships, communities, as well as institutions within India. Subsequently, narrowing the scope to educational and cultural institutions, the focus rests on elucidating the endeavours undertaken by the collective community. The present study narrates the concerted efforts made to convert adversity into opportunities for growth and development. The Literature Department of Shoolini University, India, a youthful educational establishment nestled in the lower Himalayas, marshalled its resources and triumphed over the challenge it encountered. The subsequent discussion highlights both short-term and long-term measures, along with the ripple effect of the adopted strategies, as the institution aimed to extend its outreach beyond the confines of the campus. Through the medium of literature, solace was intended for a segment of suffering humanity, recognising the profound therapeutic potential inherent within this art form, in the belief that literature will persevere when all else fails.

## **An Unprecedented Adversity Necessitates Change**

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new” (“Morte d’Arthur”, 1859). These poignant words, spoken by the eminent 19th-century bard Alfred Lord Tennyson, hold within them the essence of a profound transformation not only in societal structures but also in the landscape of education, curriculum and pedagogy. In

the wake of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns, literature departments found themselves at the precipice of a crisis. Educators were confronted with an existential quandary: How could they kindle and sustain their students' interest in the enchanting realm of books, narratives and knowledge when the very world they inhabited seemed to unravel at the seams? An imperative question loomed large over the academic community: In a world reeling from the aftershocks of a devastating virus, could the teaching of literature still be justified? What role did literature play when the global community grappled with death, disease and profound uncertainty? These questions echoed sentiments expressed nearly a century ago by Auden, who poetically mused that poetry "makes nothing happen" ("In Memory of W.B. Yeats", 1940). Earlier, Yeats, in his work "Lapis Lazuli" (1989), had bemoaned the weariness of a world that had grown tired of perpetually cheerful poets. Yet here we stand in the aftermath of a catastrophe that brought humanity to its knees, amidst the haunting spectre of death and disease. The very foundations of our priorities have shifted radically, demanding introspection into the place of literature and language in this new order. As the world embarks on a journey of healing and recovery, grappling with the intricacies of vaccination and beyond, as we collectively invest in bolstering our physical immunity, we must also ponder upon the immunity of the soul. What role does literature or language play in this process of healing and renewal?

And what of us, the custodians and seekers of literature? Are we rendered obsolete in this changing world, cast aside like yesterday's newspapers? As Eliot aptly cautioned, "last year's words belong to last year's language. Next year's words await another voice" ("Little Gidding", 1942). Does this imply that we, as purveyors of "last year's language", must find new voices and new means of relevance in a world profoundly altered by the crucible of a global pandemic? The premise we assert is that change is an inescapable facet of society, transcending all strata of human existence. Concurrently, pedagogical transformation becomes an inevitable consequence of the remarkable advancements witnessed in the realm of science and technology. Moreover, certain established fixtures of the past, once deeply entrenched, now languish on the brink of redundancy or, at the very least, have been dislodged from their revered pedestals. Consider, for instance, the conventional classroom – a locus of fervent preoccupation for our generation in times gone by. Today, however, one must question its relevance. Similarly, the printed book, a meticulously bound collection of pages that commanded our attention during our formative years, necessitates a re-visioning of its status. The present era demands novel channels of knowledge dissemination, fresh pedagogical strategies and innovative means of communicating with our students, who diverge significantly from our own past experiences.

Returning to the contention that change is an inexorable force, a retrospective examination of earlier instructional methods becomes pertinent. Throughout history, diverse modalities of teaching have emerged. Oral transmission through tales and itinerant minstrels, the profound impact of song, dance and the epic tradition predating written language – all preceded the advent of the guru, the teacher and the employment of blackboards and chalk. The last century witnessed the advent of cinema, television and radio, each heralding transformative shifts in the educational landscape. Today, the omnipresence of the internet, Zoom, Google, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, among countless others, further illustrates the ever-evolving nature of instructional paradigms. Each metamorphosis necessitated adaptability, prompting human ingenuity to rise to the occasion and successfully navigate the changing tides.

The contemporary era grappled with a crisis that permeated global consciousness – the formidable entity known as COVID-19. Despite its widespread recognition, uncertainties persist regarding the virus's origins. Did bats play a role in its genesis, or was it the product of laboratory manipulation? The precise genesis remains shrouded in ambiguity, leaving us bereft of concrete knowledge. Have the individuals entrusted with disseminating crucial information to the world inexplicably vanished, or have they met an untimely demise? The fate of these figures remains unknown. Consequently, significant gaps in our understanding persist. Nevertheless, the question arises: do these uncertainties bear substantial consequences? The paramount concern lies in the fact that this devastating outbreak extended its tentacles across the globe, compelling individuals to retreat indoors, imposing an eerie silence and awakening a newfound reverence for the divine, even among the staunchest agnostics. On one hand, the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing divisions among people, engendering chasms that emerge in moments of widespread panic, where the adversary remains elusive. On the other hand, the shared confinement brought individuals closer together. Paradoxically, these close quarters also gave rise to detrimental effects, as clashing personalities and frictions ensued. Under normal circumstances, individuals have the liberty to seek solace in the company of others when close friends or family members become overwhelming. Yet, during the stringent lockdown, such respite was unattainable. Conflicts inevitably erupted as venturing outside became an impossibility, necessitating silence and endurance within the confines of one's dwelling. Alarming surges in domestic violence, abuse, excessive alcohol consumption and intoxication became conspicuous. Moreover, numerous individuals, particularly those operating within the informal economic sector, found themselves unemployed due to the restrictions imposed. Some were fortunate enough to continue working remotely, maintaining a semblance of connection through cyberspace. However, those with limited resources were devoid of such alternatives. The experience of

living through the COVID era proved unprecedented for all and it is our collective hope that such circumstances never recur.

The implementation of stringent lockdown measures on a global scale gave rise to a seismic shift in the way we connect, interact and educate ourselves. As societies across the world grappled with the daunting challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital realm emerged as a lifeline, offering solace, continuity and a semblance of normalcy in these tumultuous times. Traditional social gatherings, those cherished moments of togetherness, gradually receded into memory as virtual meetings took centre stage. Platforms like Zoom, Skype and Google Meet became the portals through which we rekindled connections, celebrated milestones and shared our joys and sorrows. In this digital landscape, virtual soirées and digital rendezvous became the new norm, allowing us to bridge the physical distance that separated us from our loved ones. Even cultural pursuits, once confined to physical spaces and galleries, sought refuge within the expansive realm of cyberspace. Art exhibitions, musical performances and literary events found a global audience through virtual exhibitions and online platforms. The creative spirit, resilient and adaptable, continued to flourish, offering solace and inspiration to a world enshrouded in darkness.

Online education, too, experienced a transformative surge, assuming a prominent role in the educational landscape. With schools and universities forced to close their physical doors, educators and students alike turned to virtual classrooms and digital learning platforms. The traditional boundaries of brick-and-mortar education gave way to a digital frontier where knowledge flowed unbounded. However, these remarkable developments unfolded against a backdrop of gloom. The relentless toll of COVID-19, exacerbated by co-morbidities and limited access to healthcare, cast a shadow over our collective consciousness. The global landscape became a breeding ground for despondency and anguish, transcending the boundaries of social standing, ethnicity, gender, race and culture.

In this regard, the pandemic paradoxically acted as a perceived equalizer, as it indiscriminately affected individuals from all walks of life. Yet, in reality, it was far from being an equalizer. Among the most grievously affected were women, who found themselves burdened with heightened responsibilities. Many bore the brunt of domestic abuse and violence perpetrated by their unemployed spouses, making evident the dark underbelly of the crisis. These lamentable truths, etched into the annals of our shared experience, constitute an undeniable facet of our present reality. As we navigate this complex tapestry of change and adversity, we must continue to seek solutions that address not only the immediate challenges but also the deeper inequalities and injustices that the pandemic has exposed.

## **Overcoming Adversity: Shoolini University's Literature Department to the Fore**

At this critical juncture, we, a group of literature educators hailing from Shoolini University in Solan, Himachal Pradesh, engaged in profound deliberations regarding the most efficacious means of navigating the prevailing circumstances and extending support to both ourselves and others amidst these dire predicaments. How could we extend a glimmer of hope to our counterparts scattered across different regions, all grappling with the same harrowing ordeal? Equally pressing was our duty towards our youthful students, who, like us, were ensnared in the clutches of profound mental distress. Lacking the experience and maturity that accompanies age and experience, they found themselves navigating the treacherous waters of life with less fortitude. Considering this, we endeavoured to establish a connection with them, despite the barriers imposed by a world fragmented in isolation, where conventional modes of communication were nearly insurmountable. Restricted solely to the realm of online communication, we tirelessly endeavoured to facilitate their access to literary texts that inhabited the vast expanse of cyberspace. These texts had to reside within the public domain, comprising timeless literary classics that retain their relevance despite the passage of time and geographical location. Additionally, we sought out books imbued with messages capable of uplifting and invigorating spirits languishing amidst the tumultuous era defined by the reverberations of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this unprecedented era, we found ourselves navigating uncharted waters, witnessing a staggering loss of life on a global scale. The toll inflicted by the pandemic extended beyond the realm of the disease itself, encompassing the scarcity of vital resources such as oxygen and adequate medical facilities. Even in death, individuals encountered obstacles as the congestion within cremation grounds impeded the performance of the last rites. The very fabric of familial structures crumbled beneath the weight of overwhelming economic and social pressures. In the face of such adversities, our conviction deepened, propelling us to devise novel methodologies for safeguarding the well-being of our students and those entrusted to our care. To combat the pervasive sense of isolation and despondency, it became imperative to facilitate meaningful interactions that transcended the conventional modes of engagement familiar to us in times past. The world underwent a transformation, heralding an epoch of change, demanding that we adapt our modes of communication, accordingly, aligning them with the exigencies of the present circumstances.

In this context, the words of Charles Darwin resonate with renewed significance that it is not the most intellectual, not the strongest species that survives, but

the one that is best able to adapt and adjust to the changing environment. As we confront new challenges, it becomes imperative to devise appropriate strategies, enabling us to navigate this altered landscape with resilience and efficacy. Driven by these considerations, we embarked upon the organisation of weekly literary gatherings, characterised by their simplicity, accessibility and a return to the foundational elements of literature. Rather than succumbing to the allure of grandiose, esoteric and theory-laden events, we sought to establish an intimate connection with the timeless classics. These literary gems, long overshadowed by the deluge of theoretical jargon that has inundated the scholarly discourse in recent decades, beckoned to be unearthed and revitalised, resuming their rightful place of prominence and relevance. Guided by our overarching motto, “Back to our Basics”, we embarked on a profound journey of rediscovery, delving into the profound works of literature that had shaped us as students.

Every Friday, we convened a series of online events encompassing webinars, symposia, conferences and book discussions under the banner of “belletristic” or “fine literature”. Through these endeavours, we sought to forge connections, drawing individuals together in meaningful conversations centred on books and literature, thereby contributing our modest part in alleviating the burdens of the lockdown. Moreover, we ventured into unexplored terrain by hosting online readings of plays, a novelty in its own right, unencumbered by the need for memorisation or elaborate stage settings. These endeavours required minimal efforts in rehearsals or costume design, while simultaneously ensuring that the selected plays possessed a wide appeal and comprehensibility, transcending barriers of understanding and reaching diverse audiences.

In a continuous succession of events, spanning weeks, months and even years, our dedicated collective not only fulfilled our aspiration of organising regular literary gatherings but was also astounded by the resounding response we garnered from individuals across the globe. Within the passage of two years since the initiation of the lockdown, we facilitated the fruition of approximately 100 online literary debates, seminars, two notable literature festivals and three international conferences, thereby reaching an audience surpassing one hundred thousand individuals. Each of our meticulously live-streamed events attracted an impressive multitude of viewers, comprising scholars, academics, professors, writers and students hailing from diverse corners of the world. Their fervent participation attested to their yearning for social and intellectual engagement, even within the realm of the virtual, when physical interaction remained constrained. Numerous expressions of gratitude reverberated back to us, testifying to the profound impact we have had on individual lives during a period of desolation and diminished hope. We realised that we had become the proverbial milestones within a bleak

landscape, infusing a sense of anticipation and a renewed sense of purpose. Such heartfelt affirmations served as their own reward, galvanising our unwavering commitment to continue our relentless endeavours.

### **Alleviating Adversity through Creativity**

In light of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the global pandemic, we took the initiative to issue a call for submissions for an anthology of stories that would encapsulate the profound effects of the coronavirus on the daily lives of individuals. Recognising the unparalleled nature of the times we were living in, our intention was to document the dramatic changes that had unfolded worldwide. Thus, we announced the call for stories centred on Covid, which would be curated in an anthology bearing the title *Covid's Metamorphosis: Stories of our Corona Times* (2020). The response we received from contributors across the globe surpassed our expectations, with an overwhelming number of submissions pouring in. After undergoing a meticulous screening process, 27 exceptional stories were selected and subsequently edited for publication in the Kindle format on Amazon. Additionally, the anthology is available in Kindle paperback. Its inclusion in the Kindle Unlimited program has facilitated widespread free access, leading to hundreds of downloads. Although the overarching theme unifying "Covid's Metamorphosis" revolves around the corona pandemic, the stories within the anthology encompass a diverse range of subjects and approaches, delving into numerous facets of the human experience in the face of illness and mortality. What binds these narratives together is the authors' shared objective of capturing an extraordinary and unprecedented moment in history, shedding light on how the unimaginable has been transmuted into a harrowing reality by the pandemic. The stories depict the journey of mourning and recovery, traversing the lives of individuals from diverse backgrounds in India and beyond – spanning the spectrum of social status, economic standing and educational attainment. Each narrative offers profound insights into the human condition, exemplifying our innate quest for meaning amidst the monumental yet enigmatic disaster we collectively face. The stories of *Covid's Metamorphosis* recount deeply personal and emotionally wrenching tales of agony and despair. The underlying motivation was to foster a sense of shared grief and sorrow, transcending geographical distances and uniting individuals in the spirit of collective empathy.

As Yeats poignantly observed, "Those worthy of their roles do not break up their lines to weep" ("Lapis Lazuli", 1989), reminding us of the resilience and determination inherent within us all. The narratives of sorrow found within the anthology serve as a testament to the indomitable spirit of humanity, celebrating its resilience in the face of an unprecedented disaster. These stories chronicle the



arduous struggle of survivors as they grapple with the profound questions that arise amidst such calamity, searching for answers and clinging to hope. Originating from various corners of the globe, the authors offer distinct tales that, despite their diversity, strike a resonant chord with readers by virtue of the universal themes they explore.

While the pandemic has undoubtedly inflicted immense suffering upon all those affected, it has also fostered the emergence of a global community united in the pursuit of meaning amid the tragedy, collectively seeking solace and illumination in the midst of darkness. The crisis has underscored the significance of mutual care and compassion, reminding us of our interconnectedness with the natural world. It has impressively reinforced the obligation to respect and preserve the integrity of Mother Nature, for failing to do so entails dire consequences. We are compelled to pay homage to the grand cosmic forces and to honour the myriad forms of life on our planet. These sobering lessons imparted by the pandemic should not be hastily discarded, for, as Santayana (1905) aptly cautioned, their disregard would condemn us to repeat the errors of history.

As Wordsworth profoundly expressed in “Tintern Abbey” (1798), “Nature never did betray the heart that loved her”, reaffirming the enduring bond between humanity and the natural world. Similarly, Coleridge, in his poem “Dejection: An Ode” (1802), poetically underscores the reciprocal relationship between human existence and the encompassing nature, asserting that we merely offer that which we receive, with our lives serving as both the wedding garment and the shroud of nature. In essence, these evocative verses resonate with the themes of interconnectedness, reverence for nature and the profound lessons learned from the pandemic experience, serving as poignant reminders of our place within the larger ecological tapestry.

The Shoolini Literature Festival stands as a significant endeavour undertaken by our team, marking a notable milestone in the literary landscape. In February 2021, we organised the inaugural edition of the festival, which was a pioneering initiative in Himachal Pradesh, garnering widespread acclaim and participation. The festival’s success prompted the second edition, held in April 2022, which witnessed a blended format, combining both virtual platforms and in-person interactions, as the grip of the pandemic had somewhat loosened. The Literature Festival served as a testament to our commitment to fostering a vibrant literary community and providing valuable insights into the world of literature.

In tandem with this achievement, we also curated a series of academic conferences and workshops that catered to the evolving needs of the scholarly community.

Initially conducted entirely online, these events gradually transitioned into a blended format, allowing for a mix of virtual and physical participation. Through these academic endeavours, we facilitated intellectual exchange and fostered scholarly growth, effectively expanding the purview of Shoolini University as an institution for the study of Liberal Arts and Humanities. While the university had hitherto garnered acclaim for its ground-breaking scientific and technological research, the establishment of belletristic and its subsequent sustained efforts, enabled us to broaden the university's impact, extend its influence and enhance its academic stature.

The profound impact of these initiatives was reflected in the recent Times Higher Education (THE) rankings, which positioned Shoolini University as the top-ranked private university in the country. This distinction stands as a testament to the unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of the university's faculty, staff and students. The recognition bestowed upon Shoolini University underscores the institution's unwavering commitment to academic excellence and its multifaceted contributions to the realm of higher education. The accolade affirms the significance of our continuous pursuit of knowledge and our relentless dedication to nurturing a vibrant intellectual community.

Shoolini University, nestled in the serene hilly environs on the outskirts of a quaint town in the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh, emerged as a vibrant intellectual hub. Through its unwavering commitment to belletristic activities, this small campus garnered global recognition, even amidst the challenging backdrop of the past three years, dominated by the unparalleled impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Undeterred by the prevailing sluggishness, belletristic steadfastly continued its intellectual pursuits, transcending geographical boundaries and fostering a sense of scholarly camaraderie.

The reach and impact of belletristic events was truly remarkable. Scholars from various corners of the globe, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Poland, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Germany, Argentina, Syria, Iran, Turkey, Nepal, Bangladesh and numerous other nations, have participated in these events, sharing their expertise and insights. Despite the constraints of time and distance, these virtual and hybrid gatherings have served as a wellspring of intellectual nourishment, attracting a diverse range of participants. Among the attendees are esteemed scholars, erudite academics, accomplished authors, poets, undergraduate students and notable personalities from the realms of film and literature. The overwhelming online reach of these sessions is a testament to the universal appeal and relevance of the discussions hosted by belletristic.

Moreover, Shoolini University has forged fruitful international collaborations and solidified memoranda of understanding with prestigious universities abroad. These partnerships have further enriched the academic landscape, fostering a vibrant exchange of ideas, research collaborations and opportunities for mutual growth. The palpable sense of activity and intellectual vigour that permeates the campus is a testament to the collective efforts of the faculty, staff and students who have nurtured a thriving academic community. Together, we can transcend boundaries and embark on a collective journey of exploration, discovery and intellectual enlightenment.

## **Conclusions**

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the post-COVID era ushered in a dynamic and transformative period on our campus. Similar to our academic peers worldwide, we were confronted with the pressing challenge of reimagining pedagogical approaches suited to the changed circumstances. The shift from exclusively online instruction to a blended format necessitates a collective adjustment by both faculty and students. The paradigmatic shift we experienced was not merely a temporary deviation; rather, it represents an irreversible transformation of the educational landscape. Amidst this transformative process, we find ourselves continuously learning and adapting, engaging in synchronous and asynchronous modes of instruction. This journey of pedagogical exploration became an exhilarating endeavour as we ventured into uncharted territories, engaging in flip classrooms, interactive sessions, multimedia presentations and other innovative methods. The teacher and the learner embarked on a collaborative expedition, traversing the terra incognita of this evolving educational landscape.

Moreover, the past three years witnessed a significant surge in psychological ailments, including depression, in the aftermath of the pandemic. Thus, alongside their instructional responsibilities, faculty members were called upon to fulfil the role of counsellors, serving as companions, mentors and beacons of hope in the face of overwhelming darkness. And what better medium to extend this form of counselling than through the wings of poesy? In this new pedagogical paradigm, the incorporation of yoga and meditation assumed a prominent position within the curriculum, playing a pivotal role in restoring individual equilibrium during times of uncertainty. The recognition of their profound benefits is highlighted in the recent National Education Policy (NEP) document, which underscores the significance of holistic well-being and the integration of contemplative practices (Government of India 2020). As we navigate this uncharted territory, we recognise that the academic landscape demands a multifaceted approach, combining innovative pedagogy, psychological support and holistic well-being. By embracing

these transformative pedagogical strategies and integrating practices such as yoga and meditation, we endeavoured to foster an environment of resilience, self-care and personal growth. In doing so, we aimed to empower our faculty and students to navigate the uncertainties of the post-COVID era with fortitude and grace.

In conclusion, it is essential to acknowledge the historical recurrence of various types of change throughout human existence. These transformations can be classified into three distinct categories: gradual, dramatic and catastrophic, metaphorically resembling the ebb and flow of ocean waves, the ferocity of hurricanes and the devastating force of tsunamis, respectively. At present, we find ourselves standing at the precipice of a world forever altered by a cataclysmic event akin to a tsunami. Consequently, the fabric of our reality has been irreversibly transformed, compelling us to respond in profound and consequential ways.

In the face of such an upheaval, individuals are presented with diverse options for navigating this ever-changing world. Some may choose to adopt an ostrich-like approach, burying their heads in the proverbial sand, unwilling to confront the undeniable shifts that have occurred. Alternatively, others may opt for superficial modifications to their lives, hoping for incremental improvements. There are also those who advocate for a complete rupture from the past, embracing a clean slate and relinquishing all ties to previous norms and experiences. However, at Shoolini University, we chose a different path, one that involved an exploration of “fine literature” as a means of comprehending and responding to the ravages of a global pandemic. Through this amalgamation of fantasy and realism, we endeavoured to derive valuable insights, deepen our understanding and develop strategies to navigate this ever-changing landscape.

Despite the adversities we encountered, we remained steadfast in our belief in the human potential for renewal and rejuvenation, envisioning a future imbued with brightness and hope. Now, as we navigate the tempestuous seas of the coronavirus crisis, we tenaciously grasp onto fragments of hope and resilience, maintaining our composure and pressing forward. The path ahead may be fraught with challenges, encompassing fierce winds, relentless hail, tumultuous storms and relentless snowfall. Yet, in the face of each trial, we perceive an opportunity – an opportunity not to be squandered or overlooked. Indeed, the profound words of W.B. Yeats encapsulate this enduring spirit of resilience: “All things fall and are built again. And those that build them again are gay” (“Lapis Lazuli”, 1989). These are lines that remind us of the cyclical nature of existence that encompasses both periods of decline and the subsequent resurgence of hope. By embracing this ethos, we persistently strive to construct a brighter future, transcending the boundaries imposed by adversity and charting a course towards boundless possibilities.

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