



Ms. Gouri Salvi

Loss and Grief

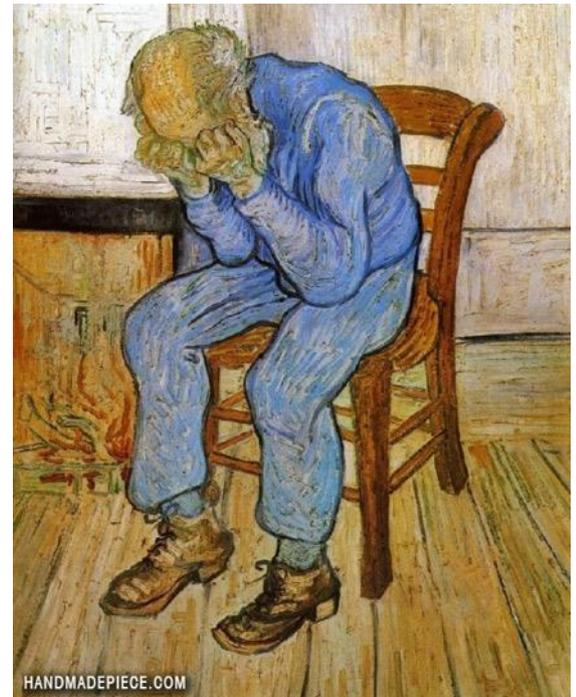
in the time of COVID 19

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an acute sense of loss, which if not understood and acknowledged for what it is, could lead to physical manifestations such as migraines, stomach aches, loss of appetite, lethargy, numbness, etc.

“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid but the sensation is like being afraid” C.S.Lewis, ‘A Grief Observed’, 1961

Today, Covid 19 is showing us exactly what the words of this renowned writer meant. As we sit within the confines of our homes while the world seems to have hit “pause”, we go through a myriad emotions – panic, paranoia, anger, distress. We may not realise that at the root of all these lie acutely painful feelings of loss and subsequent grieving. Any loss (and the dread that lies hidden underneath) triggers off terrifying infantile feelings of separation from one’s mother/caregiver. Every single one of us has experienced this.



During this pandemic, for those who have unfortunately lost a loved one, intense grief will undoubtedly be the predominant emotion. But even those who have not gone through a similar personal tragedy still have to deal with unsettling feelings of loss and grief. What is important is to recognise these emotions for what they are, find ways of dealing with them and emerge more balanced and stronger.

Fifty years ago, John Bowlby, reputed psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, conceptualised the process of grieving in four stages: **shock and numbness, yearning and searching, despair and disorganisation and reorganisation and recovery**. If we understand these we will understand much of what we are going through in these traumatic times.

When the shock of the corona virus hit us, many of us found it impossible to accept the lockdown. We were overwhelmed by a sudden loss of control over our lives. Something intruded into our lives and seemed to have taken charge. Today, we cannot go where we want, meet who we want, work as we want, party and play as we want.

Some of us can manage by tapping into our own inner resources;

others may need professional help.

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And it is exactly such

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It feels as if life as we knew it is now destroyed. All this constitutes an acute sense of loss, which if not understood and acknowledged for what it is, could lead to physical manifestations such as migraines, stomach aches, loss of appetite, lethargy, numbness, etc.

When we moved to the second stage, we yearned for what we thought we lost and often experienced a feeling of ‘emptiness’ in our life.

It began to feel as if all our dreams for our future will simply crumble. We feel shattered and long for that time when our lives felt full and rich with

academic achievements, career challenges, relationships and families. We might become acutely aware of a void in our life and get unduly preoccupied with what we don’t have right now. What is worse, we convince ourselves that this is a permanent state.

When the next phase brings despair, then hopelessness, restlessness, anger rear their ugly heads. We desperately look for someone or something to blame for this unseen “enemy” that seems to have upended our life. We either withdraw into a shell or we get enraged, aggressive and perhaps even violent.

It is very important to be able to understand that all these feelings stem from a very deep sense of loss. And it is crucial that we feel able to grieve the loss so as to be able to move on and not get helplessly stuck in any of these stages

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These phases may not always be linear — they can crisscross and move back and forth. But it is only with thoughtful understanding that we

can finally progress to a stable space of reorganisation and recovery.

A psycho-therapeutic process can help enormously in joining the dots to see the emotional interconnectedness. This is the period in our grieving where “**Hope**” resurfaces. We can finally look forward to a time when



lockdowns will end, vaccines will be ready, and we can get back to potentially healthier and more meaningful lives.