



The Great Mask Debate – To Wear or Not to Wear?

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Masks have always been important aspects of Papua New Guinean societies—be it in terms of their ceremonial uses in singsings (traditional dances or festivals) or in the more tourist-oriented festivals happening today. All regions of Papua New Guinea had different types of masks, from whole-body masks to very small ones. Each served different kinds of purposes. For instance, masks were used to entertain and excite; to represent clan moieties or totemic spirits; to strike fear, warn, or intimidate; and to conceal the wearer’s identity. An important function of masks was to protect their wearer. This includes protection in the context of warfare and protection from future incriminations when individuals mete out justice, discipline, or punishment. In most places, masks were worn and used only by men and even then, only by initiated men. With the coronavirus pandemic, however, we are witnessing a rise in the importance and usage of one particular type of mask: the standard clinical mask. While the protective function of this mask remains constant, the entity from which the wearer wishes to keep themselves safe is very different. It is a virus. With the coronavirus pandemic, we are also seeing more social inclusion in terms of the access and use of this type of mask, which all genders and ages are being urged to wear for our own good and health. We should embrace this opportunity to participate in this traditionally significant but formerly socially exclusive practice of mask-wearing. Mask-wearing is cool. It is important because it identifies you as being part of a particular group. Mask-wearing shows that you care about that group, about others, and about yourself. And if health experts are to be believed, it just might save your life.

Masks protect
 They conceal
 They hold back
 Then they reveal
 They identify
 They distinguish
 They may terrify
 But may also save you future anguish

To wear or not to wear?
 That is the question
 Keeping your health
 Or inhibiting fresh circulation of air?

But looking on the face of it
 What are the benefits

Of wearing a mask
Just for the hell of it?

Some say it's a discomfort
Others say it's necessary
I'll forgo my current comfort
For the sake of my pulmonary.

Even if you're a skeptic
Is there any harm
In wearing a mask
Just as a prophylactic?

It really isn't a novelty,
To mask up for a reason?
It is a traditional proclivity
To mask up in the right season?

Kamap olsem ol Duk-Duk
Bilong Ist Niu Briten
Ol i no sa suruk
Long taim bilong wokim kastam

O kain olsem ol Tubuan
Ol meri masalai
Em ol gutpla poroman
Lo kastam bilong ol Tolai

Custom and duty
Why should we cover our face?
Is it like wearing jewelry,
Or our saving grace?

Traim tingim ol Holosa
Bilong wonem ol werim mask?
Antap long kol ples Goroka
Ol i gat sampla task.

Na tingim tu ol Elema
Mask bilong tewel bilong wara
Em ol lain bilong yumi long Kerema
Ol lain bilong stap lareva.

Is it a personal choice
Or a government decision
To muffle your voice
With the new face fashion?
To wear or not to wear?
That is the question

To fear or not to fear?
Personal decision or government stipulation?

For some, wearing a mask
Inhibits breathing
For others, it's no farce
For it enables living.

But let not the law
Take away my right
To breathe alone in my car
When I'm driving home at night.
If I'm in a crowded place
And I forget to mask my face
Then I accept any penalty
As long as it is not too hefty.

Niupla Pasin Protocol
That is the 'new normal'
To follow WHO or GoPNG,
What's the verdict of the public jury?

Of masks and symbolisms
What is the appeal?
Without going into tribalism's,
Generally to protect or veil.

Protecting or taking away half your face?
Whichever side you propagate
Let us all find common place
In this great mask debate.

Coviet-straggler in Paradise

Is this the death of progress?
 Or the progression of death?
 NCO – New COVID Order
 A Trojan-horse
 For NWO – New World Order
 Stuck in purgatory
 A perpetual limbo
 Is this the new normal?
 Niupla Pasin protocol.

But who knew?
 WHO knew is who knew
 Better late and slow
 Than not being in the know
 Now we all know
 What WHO knew
 So don't be ignorant
 Don't be a Covidiot!

Out with the old
 And in with the new
 Replace the old new
 With the new new

Can't move forward
 Can't fall back
 What becomes of the morrow?
 Spiraling out of control
 On a convoluted trek
 When questions are the answers
 And answers are questions
 Then there are no true answers!
 So we all become dancers
 To the W-H-O track.

Nowhere to go
 But the bounds of home
 The city limits
 Or in my mind I roam
 Biding time
 Until I must bite the bullet
 And make a move
 Without committing a crime.

I'm a Coviet-straggler
 Left behind
 A stationary hustler

Going nowhere fast
Looking forward
Yet caught in the present
Can the future ever be
As bright as a COVID-free past?

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