

A STATE OF DESPAIR

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(â??Where were you all these twenty years, what went awkwardly wrong for all of you,â?? my voice was slow, concerned, suggesting John, â??you neednâ??t worry now, feel at home.â?? This is the story of John.â??)

For the last two months, Iâ??m wrestling with a touchy issue. I have to rehabilitate a sixty-five-year-old gentleman. Though his appeal was genuine, Iâ??m not sure, could I flatly assure him. Age seemed a limiting tag. At the moment Iâ??m settled in a cloistered retired living, I knew Iâ??m not socially connected enough to bail him out. However, I decided â??let me give an honest try,â?? many doubts floating in my head about the assignment and the person wanting it.

His appeal, â??please find me a jobâ??, it isnâ??t as simple as he uttered with a sigh, considering his age.

The old man shot in like a bolt, into my home, after a twenty year long hiatus. Of course, I know him; we worked together, two decades back, in an association minding a conglomerate of privately managed schools in our city.

During the early eighties, biting the craze of English medium education, schools big, small and smaller mushroomed in our city. Enter any lane or street; any vacant building would overnight got transformed into a multi-coloured frontage carrying a huge banner announcing, â??shortly opening a so and so English medium school, the expert English coaching from LKG to X Std.

The city saw the parents ran like mad to admit their toddlers into these educational shacks.

A joke made rounds relating to these â??matchbox-shapedâ?? teaching centres. At worst they are a few regulations to establish a liquor shops, but to start a school the norms, â??itâ??s free for all,â?? none bothered to ask questions.

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As the craze for these ill-equipped, ill-maintained teaching shops touched its peak, the department suddenly announced a few stringent rules for the â??instantâ?? schools. There was panic as the majority of the schools faced closure; thousands of studentsâ?? future held in danger.

Iâ??m then managing one of the popular schools. I was asked along with other schools partners to stitch together an improvised association with a mission to protect the future of the children. Inwardly, I knew the hidden plan was to safeguard the hundreds of school owners and their investment. At the time Iâ??m compelled to go with the majority.

In this commotion, amidst the mercenary kind of assignment, I shared a few responsibilities with the above mentioned â??old gentleman.â?? Letâ??s call him John.

When John called, the voice took me back to twenty years. Since then, in our city, there was an upheaval of progress opening new doors for academics, and the advent of new technology! A whole new breed of generation entered this world.

Although John is sixty-five, his dressing, a neat, crisp, well creased white shirt and trousers belied his age. His eyes gave away hints of burden he is carrying behind. He seemed uncomfortable looking at me directly; perhaps he doesnâ??t like to show me his fatigued face. I could note a hint of hesitancy as if he is collecting the right phrases of intention of his unexpected visit.

As John entered my library, where I usually receive guests, he is like a character walking in from an old movie. It took a while for me to recover from the initial shock and confusion. I could barely blurt out any courtesies.

â??Where were you all these twenty years, what went awkwardly wrong for all of you,â?? my voice was slow, concerned, suggesting John, â??you neednâ??t worry now, feel at home.â??

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Collecting himself, John narrated his long story of shame. It has all the makings of grand infamy: disputes, controversy, legal battles, and all the three partners at daggers drawn. All of them together slandered to tear down to nothing the school establishment they had owned. The ensuing feuds consumed their entire finances, burnt down to ashes their social standing; headlines in local newspapers maligned their reputation and sealed their prospects: if any.

The allegations were so scandalous as it compelled them to leave the city and go into hiding for twenty long years. Now the cloud of disgrace has settled John became bold enough to earn a new beginning in the city.

He seemed struggling hard to mask his anxiety, not willing the whole helplessness to show itself crusted on his face.

What a life! How befitting the destroying consequences of an unplanned future. Itâ??s about a frightening spell of nonchalant temperament failing to create a financial cushion to fall back when in deep crisis. Itâ??s the lunacy that rules when the heat of rage dominates our egos which unleashes a rampage on carefully built business affairs and the dear family. Shattered in

a blink, the aftereffects, we see in the decimated lives of the closest kindred fall deep into depression.

It didnâ??t take much time looking at John, to make out his pathos. It wrapped around him like a wet blanket; the disconcerting way he sat on the chair, his shoulders drooped, stared at the book on the table, eyes not able to look at me straight. Every word uttered revealed how emotionally crushed he had been. His creased forehead showed the anguish he is carrying within himself: an extinguished spirit of his long gone vigour.

Here is a man badly mauled by the fate and who is now sitting across me. I gave one compassionate look at him; I couldnâ??t come out with proper words of comfort.

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Finally, I gave him a consoling assurance, â??there are some good people who got dealt badly by fate,â?? and promised him to find a job as early as I can.

Two months have passed since I confronted John. He regularly calls me, enquiring, â??Is there any chance for me,â?? his voice thin and tuneless.

â??He is sixty-five, the work would be strenuous, we prefer those younger in age,â?? was the disappointing answer, I received from many acquaintances I approached.

â??How could I convey such blunt repliesâ?? I have to rehearse twice before answering his call so that, a sense of upset doesnâ??t fill my voice? I imagined a hope-filled optimist, eagerly waiting at the other end.

Robbed of all benefits a decent life could offer, tucked away in an unknown place living in shadows, no hope of a safe shelter. I feared an unthinkable question; â??If I were to swap the Johns ordeal, can I ever come out aliveâ??? I knew the answer I get; shrieking loudly, â??definitely not!â??

There I sensed a deep emotive worry spread in me and beaten me greatly. Itâ??s not what John had been through. Is there anything, I searched for

myself, something rattled me. No one should ever bitterly taste, at any time, what John been through for twenty long years. Never me!

I called myself for a meditative soul-searching trip to dig out any avertable lessons from Johnâ??s horrendous experiences.

I could gather many, and I assured myself, â??Iâ??m always at a safe harbour as long as I lived myselfâ??, every day; reliving close by to a few rejuvenating mantras.

â??Keep your eyes wide open to the future â?? where the retirement privileges have finite shelf life and resources sliding on a diminishing track. It pays to concentrate on how to save money. Donâ??t allow your whims to decide the pressure on your purse. Donâ??t rely on others eyes closed, even your children. Happiness enrolls you, only when you recognize how to persevere your health regimen. Remember your family is the only security net if your health fails without notice. Itâ??s good to grasp the fact happiness is your right; donâ??t live your life for others. Vote for this precept â?? a sure blessing which ensures peacefulness to your mind and soulâ??.

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â??When the vigour got drained, sources of regular income dried, never opt for loans â?? remember loans are not gifts. Live within your means. Donâ??t hide your struggles, have good friends to share them, ask their help how to work through themâ??.

My habits: this is the gem of my mindset which Iâ??m gloriously boastful about, and I wonâ??t mind trumpeting its benefits any louder to any willing ear.

â??Cultivate good habits; habits make our lives better and easier. Even at the retired age habits have sweeping power for serenity, energy, and growth. I realized in good time my happiness, my health, my fitness, my peace of mind, my family members happiness, the success of my family depend on my habitsâ??.

Category

1. Uncategorized

Tags

1. #despair
2. #school
3. #toddlers

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