

IT PAYS TO HAVE GOOD FRIENDS

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(I grabbed the deal to plan a trip with my good old childhood buddies â?? the association that grew over five decades: preserved, unbroken, and secured. Most of them crowded at the threshold to tear into the sixties of age â?? the high-spirited, rambunctious gang of fourteen of us heading for a three-hour-long ride to beach-side cottages.)

Looking back, for three years, I have been hanging around the empty rooms and the unslept beds, and lifeless corridors that jerk me to the melancholic blues that stifle the moment I wobble into a knotty, long day. Then they are the shiny tiles that remind hundreds of hikes the wheelchair had roamed where I carried my wife debilitated by cancer. The wheelchair, nowhere else to go, now sulks in a void; I donâ??t know in whichever way itâ??s mourning the passing away of its owner but stands defeated in a corner.

Stress is a dangerous state. It makes me rush out for relief outlets as I treat it as an emergency that couldnâ??t wait to cause me run to a situation where I could be out of the moans of monotony I serve myself at home.

Itâ??s was the background of dry terrain in my mind when I chanced upon an unconfirmed outing planned by my childhood gang â?? a half-dozen of them crowded at the threshold to tear into the sixties of age â?? buoyant, youngish, and as mischievous as the school going kids.

I grabbed the deal at once and decided to go along with them â?? it surely will provide all the grand relief Iâ??m seeking, hungry for the sight of good old childhood buddies and connection that has associated with them for over five decades: preserved, unbroken, and secured.

It didnâ??t take much time for me to conclude the appealing idea of the trip got fizzled out, ran a rally of â??ifâ??s and butsâ?? for weeks. No one so far has picked up the strings of quick decisions, to ensure an acceptable chorus on dates, travel arrangements, and the cost involved.

I not sure if my mediation in planning and coordination would get accepted and others will tag along. Itâ??s a question of mutual acceptance, and I hold my shred of suspicion, â??can I bring all of them out of their business of lifeâ??s routines, pack them into a van and keep them forty-eight hours away from their duty-bound schedules.â?? I knew the venture was never tried out earlier, whatever the assemblies we had enjoyed were over a lunch or a brief trip in a day

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The prospects seemed as excited of a weekend jaunt to everyone as much of the cloud of unexpressed doubt: could everyone in the group â?? a close-knitted batch played and provided in the same school five decades ago, will they show the desired chorus of enthusiasm to show up on the designated day?

After chomping two plates of â??Mirchi bajjis,â?? (a local evening snack) at an exclusive club, one evening, I consulted two of my buddies, before I took hold of the mission with a refreshed confidence. Itâ??s plotting a day and a half outing to a local beach resort, and since our folks being deeply spiritual, we added a few temples visits to the itinerary.

Once I have announced Iâ??m in charge of the outing/pilgrimage, everyone chirped, â??great, go ahead,â?? followed by a deluge of â??thumbs upâ?? emojis appeared on my phone â?? a digital version of expression of joy, approval, and support.

Ten days later, I found myself camera slung across the shoulders, joined the storm of mischief and loudest laughter I could ever let in, packed in a minivan, too excited no one seems willing to sit. That is the high-spirited, rambunctious gang: fourteen of us altogether heading for a three-hour-long ride to beach-side cottages.

Iâ??m happy that everyone seems to like wearing their brightest smiles, kindest faces, and Iâ??m enjoying the comfortable smells from the basket full of snacks being unpacked. Iâ??m yet to join their seemingly contagious pure fun that charged everyone, despite the age and most volatile being the five female confidants. Me,

Iâ??m rigid like a log, held by a dilemma. Iâ??m a good listener, always enjoyed the company of others, but I saw myself more of a loner, an introvert. Thatâ??s me most of the time. After my wifeâ??s demise, I attempted to emerge from that shell and said to myself, â??Iâ??ll see if I can come out the guilt of preferring silence, passiveness, and pitying looks.â?? I took it, how quickly, I genuinely wished, I could be a willing participant of pranks, silliness, and laughter and account for a supply of happiness.

Inside my head, the brisk tentative emotions playing havoc, the van seemed picking up the speed as we left behind the outskirts of the city. I still stood as a mere spectator at the blare of songs and volume of laughter soaring, still not yet ready to do away of my shy approach, untie myself and plunge in and be available.

Ritualistically, my friends being pious souls, it appeared the trip more or less taking a spiritual spin as I could make out after I curiously eyed the whole baskets of holy paraphernalia like lamps, oil, the wicks, all the auspicious materials stacked respectfully in a safe place. Later, I came to guess that we would all providentially go about to offer prayers together. Itâ??s the month of â??Karthika Masam,â?? the holiest month for the Hindus â?? a month of enlightenment and illumination and a favorite month for Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. The month usually starts from October 20 and will end on November 18.

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Holy bath in the sea before sunrise and prayers offered to the Sun God, and puja to Lord Shiva, itâ??s believed, would refresh all the atomic substance of the body and the mind.

Itâ??s a lovely morning and a serendipitous theme humming out with surprising good luck stacked in favor of all our childhood buddies.

There is a streak of odd approach that dominates my reasoning when I discuss temples and rituals I witness. Honestly, Iâ??m not a deeply religious person, but at no moment I would trivialize the other personâ??s pious sentiments. I live my life rightfully and respect the doctrines of others I move along with always.

But itâ??s true whatever the religious inclination I carried deep within me, itâ??s perhaps because of a diffused aura I had shared with my wife over thirty years of temple visits I accompanied her whenever she felt prayerful. I still entertain the imagination that any temple my wife walked around with folded hands in a holy sanctum, I recollect the reverberations of her prayers and chants that would stir up and charmed me, as if an invisible voice whispers, to bow and kneel before the deity. Later on, I get a feel, the silent strokes on my face receiving the pull of the cosmic influence.

A few hours after lunch, I could see the sun packed up for the day red tired and quickly ran to its moor far in the horizon beyond the foamy crests of the waves. Leaving behind an orange-painted sky and sandy surface turned soft and mirror-like, showing the interplay of reflections of darkening skies and people wading around.

After a brief slumber, we walked towards the waves squealed and stomped all over the beach, deliriously happy. I could see nothing seemed to restrain us, the excitement that got build up over a month for this very moment, to enjoy the small beauties of life â?? while entering the sixties, the gift of being together as one lovable gang. Strangely, today, I have no negative emotions; the scene before me, my childhood friends chasing the waves, dipping in salty waters is quite uplifting and healing.

Leaving behind the roaring waves merge into the night; we all found ourselves packed into a room, the collective voices loud enough to drown the sounds of crashing tides heaving outside. Welcome to the evening of games, singing, and teasing. The room shuddered with screams claiming, â??Iâ??m the winner, itâ??s not fair, I didnâ??t play,â?? type of banter, more than the games the kidding capers sounded more enjoyable. The walls lit with the energy that belied our age and veil of inhibitions we were safeguarding till then.

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I felt we were like a mob of LKG students left in a room informed that the teacher wouldnâ??t report for the next few hours, with a helpful dig, â?? donâ??t disturb others.â??

Something magical happened to me on that evening though not clear at that moment, but I think I have overcome a few of my inhibitions, I grew a tad less self-conscious, Iâ??m able to let out my voice to join the chorus of singing, a first in my life. Later that night, when I tossed restlessly on the bed, something pulled off inside, making me feel good about myself, something overcome, started feeling a nice healthy mental fallout similar to, â??this is the person you have to be.â?? â?? Open and communicative and uninhibited.

I felt strong, devoid of any lonely sentiment, but comfortable with the belief, who Iâ??m, and who Iâ??m not. I have to say a huge thank you to my friends who showed today how I should feel good about myself and stay positive and stay together.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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Author
eswarnadipalli

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