

MY COMFORT OF HOPE

Description

Sundays play a different tune for me. I wake up a tad earlier than usual and walk the length of my corridor. Peep out through windows just to make sure whether the Sun appeared, sober or lively or hidden. Because on Sundays I go out, away from the city noises and stay a shade closer to green natural surroundings. Not alone but with a backpack full of photographic gadgets.

Yes, Sundays I wish to be alone, I drive alone. Looking for small streams, pools or small body of water tucked deep adjacent to a hillock or a bunch of trees. Not too far away from the place, I stay, but those out-of-the-way locations I select as subjects to my photography.

Vijayawada – the city I have been living for more than fifty years is a photographer's delight. It's bundled between the Eastern Ghats on one side, luxuriously rolling river Krishna on the other, and three curvy canals slashing in-between. Politically vibrant, the city of more than twelve lakhs population is at twenty-four-hour dynamism that never tires, never pauses.

As usual one Sunday a week ago I had set out for my morning indulgence. To the place, I had chosen was a twenty-minute ride. The early morning drive allowed me to enjoy the warm Sun, comfortable behind the steering all by myself – just me and my thoughts. A special blend of courage and madness is what it requires looking for this kind of rich privacy. I boastfully kept on driving before I reached the spot. Spread in front of me was the massive riverbed of Krishna River.

The distribution of the sand dunes reached as far as my eyes could follow. Early morning, the sharp summer rays settled on the sand, warned me walking across could be tiresome. Breaking the monotony, I could spot lush green wild grass swaying enclosing shallow ponds – reflecting the blue sky on its surface. These small bluish springs scattered at frequent locations on the otherwise vacant landscape. Perhaps, left behind, as reminders of the previous year's floods.

The vast yellow setting of sandy shore, interspersed with a collection of clear pools of water. Lined by the green tall growth of grass, the visual spectacle was complete with five man-made wonders.

We can see a road bridge and dam across the river that protectively divides the downstream dry river bed. And a huge reservoir created on the upstream, where the three canals that snake through the city gets connected. The reservoir forms the water recreation zone for our city folks.



The next are the two mammoth railway bridges spanning 1.3 kilometers. I'm always fascinated by the huge geometrical arrangement of iron girders. The railway coaches entering the oversized network of iron frames and passing through them, when I observed from a distance, wondered if it were a red caterpillar sliding across.



The other two are the parallel bridges dedicated to the regular rush of vehicular traffic.

All the four bridges stood on towering foundations, measuring two to three meters in breadth. More than hundred in numbers each, the symmetry of the pillars strikingly framed the whole length of city's skyline in all its glory.



I decided on the day standing on the edge of the river bed, to walk the whole- length across the empty space. Maybe, two to three kilometers stretch on the sandy cover towards the rows of oversized foundation columns. Standing beneath them I could catch the steady clamor of horns, booming roars of heavy motor vehicular movement. Choosing between the stalwartly pillars I had planned to complete my photo schedule.

Until this point, I had been in pleasant disposition relishing the landscape facing me.

I walked towards the foundation columns standing as sentinels. They looked like silently guarding the mother earth even in these driest conditions. In less than five minutes as I hit the loose sand surface the sprawling summer severity struck me hard. The backpack increased its pressure on my back, carrying the tripod, on one hand; it had become hard to breathe normally. My whole body like a sponge started off dripping with sweat. It didnâ€™t take much time to see my whole body drenched in wetness. I couldnâ€™t open my eyes as they became sticky with drops of sweat sliding down from eyebrows.

It was evident to me then that with difficulty in breathing, the outdoor clothing plastered to my body. It was wise to look for a shade near the pillars. Instead to repeat the awkward walk back again in the rinsed sweaty outfit. For a few moments, I stood exposed to harshest Sun beating on me, and the terrible situation of not able to breathe normally.

I hate my breathing problem issue. I have been a periodical victim of it throwing me in great physical distress as it pounced upon me during unexpected hours. At once it was evident to me the increased discomfort that had filled me both inside and outside. â€•Let me look for a quick coverâ€• I promptly resolved.

I dashed towards the rows of standing columns a few minutes away from me. Thankfully, they masked the Sun forming good shade in a semi-circle around them. In between the sandy surface and the pillar, there was a thick concrete bed. I made myself comfortable pressed against the pillar and stretching my legs carelessly apart. It took a quick effort and a little while to catch my normal breathing again. I know

it would take a bit of time to get back to normal situation.

I checked at myself and the way I got deposited on that Sunday morning, on a no-man's land. Suddenly, an ugly imagination crept into my head.

I'm sitting alone under a gigantic pillar standing a hundred feet above me. Left exhausted, staring at an empty barren space a few kilometers, surrounding me. Not a living soul bothered to check, "Hey what happened to you?". One thought that I'm single and living alone popped up a question, "Do anyone know the spot I'm stranded at this moment?" I stuck in a remote place, perspiring thoroughly, and with disturbed breathing. "How long would it take anyone to find me and come to my rescue, if I'm harmed in any manner?"

A thousand questions swarmed inside me. I'm living alone; I got out early in the morning. No one knew for sure which route I had taken. I hardly expect that somebody would care enough to call "Hey what is your plan today, hope everything is fine with you?". I could count on none, who would prompt themselves wanting to enquire my whereabouts.

That was a miserable fantasy that made me nervous for a moment. But looking at how helplessly I remained hunched, all by myself is the bottom line of my life since last eighteen months after the demise of my wife Mani.

That would bring out one question why I'm inviting risky options to fill my Sundays.

After Mani passed away a year and a half ago, I had spent three years prior to that, as her caretaker. I had pulled out gradually from all my professional duties, freed from financial burdens. Got my two children married and settled.

For three years my days followed with hospital visits, doctors, consultations, sitting outside operation theatres. Unending sleepless nights spent watching over Mani, attending to her medical needs.

After she passed away she left behind a huge vacuum in my life. I found myself left to hold on to bleak days and empty hours. It hadn't taken long to learn that loneliness was a beast that eats you away bit by bit. You don't even have a choice to run away from it and it is not such an easy task. Friends are hardly present whenever you really need them. A few of them are like feathers floating in the air before you, they are there but you could never catch them. They are there when they wanted to, but surely not when I needed them. Badly, madly.

Well before my loneliness dominated my days and my emotions I resolved to come out of my comfort zone. I weaved my days into activities that I love. Thus my initiation into writing and Sunday outings to photography turned out to become my pet cravings. Around my gloomy days and comfortless hours, I had built a resourceful demeanor. A path on which I can see the world with a comfort of hope.

Now I wake up every day, thinking, planning and meditating. To note down what retrospective essentials of my past are worthy to go into my weekly articles? How I can paint in words the world of Mani and my memories entwined with her. Every day I sit before my computer with firmness, "There is no time to waste". I pretty well know writing is hard work. I have to create themes, ideas in my mind first before I commit them to the keyboard. It requires patience: tons of it. To dig out the memories that are long buried; stashed away in remote corners of my past. And unlimited time to read the first drafts:

reread, correct, rephrase and put them in readable paragraphs. The task has been equally of pain at its lowest form and pleasure at its highest grace.

For many of us, our mind and our limitations turn out as our worst enemy. But for me my many unfavorable circumstances, fierce adversities gave me the emotional ammunition to challenge them. Deliberately, I have picked up many small meaningful efforts to conquer them. The result, my days became pleasant and people appeared easy to deal with. I'm happy that I'm on the right path of daily evolution. I have chosen the writing and photography as my agents of change and self-discovery. And I'm grateful for the pleasures and blessings small and big they are presenting. I'm celebrating them, treasuring them every day that my life is offering me.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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