

PATTAYA â?? A GO-GO PLACE

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(It is well past midnight, there is pandemonium on the street overflowing with snoopy tourists â?? shoulder to shoulder: curious, mad, unrestrained and raunchy, and once we step into a nightclub, its sheer madness at its erotogenic heights. For four days, we, a gang of twelve celebrated the nights at Pattaya a buzzing coastal city in Thailand. As the dusk descends the streets comes alive in its titillating best, bawdy colors, sensual smells and roving the best nightlife in Thailand.)

Howsoever I whip up my memories I couldnâ??t call upon any recognizable images about Bangkok visit I had twenty-five years back. Only a few sketches hung faintly not giving any details of time spent in the vast capital of Thailand. I rather remember the purpose of the visit: the Rotary Conference. I was surprised by my forgetfulness. I stared at a blank page of my long-buried visit.

The intent of the last monthâ??s trip was appealingly clear: four days at Pattaya, a buzzing coastal city in Thailand. I convinced myself it is to relax, get gratified, go in for places where I could let go off moralistic inhibitions, and walk the alleys and narrow lanes that dare my libido. And I would love to let my shutter whirr at its beautiful beaches and multi-colored, multi-racial vacation goers.

The mood is upbeat among the twelve college friends from Agricultural College, at Bapatla â?? a coastal town in Andhra Pradesh, in Southern India. Tickets in hand, itinerary â??whatsapped,â?? and hotel rooms booked, though all of us are at the entry gate of retirement we demonstrated a swagger like full-grown teenagers. Physically

competent but wise enough to stay restrained.

My college days were never easy going when I joined in 1978, I was never an academic explorer, but I have prospered more with my camera work and picture taking but hardly studious and serious. I never sweat out in fieldwork, laboratories, or career-related considerations. Looking at a tardy myself â?? a lean personality then, I quickly led to a conclusion that in educative aspects, Iâ??m a mediocre, unambitious, light-hearted chap. Evidently, I was not a hard-working type: the quality required in any professional college. In the four years of hostel stay, a few good friends made the college life bearable and memorable.

Most of us, though taken different paths in life, there is a common thread that has tied us together, perhaps the hard life lessons we have learned during the four years in the unspoiled academic precincts. Since then, almost four decades later, whenever we had gathered for any occasion, I could notice the receding grey hairs that testified the challenges met and slammed and made fun of sagging bellies, and stooping postures. Iâ??m aware many of us had gone through undivulged conflicts in lives, professional challenges, sometimes rivalries, childrenâ??s education and then their marriages. And Iâ??m pleased with the fact most of my friends have changed their goalposts midway, enlightened their way up the professional ladder. After hearing from them a few anecdotes, it surprised me at the resilience and ability of how my friends have bounced back and faced all the ups and downs throughout with a â??come devil mayâ?? attitude.

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I gingerly stack these treasures and memories and share with my children my past and my secrets: that the source of my poise, my abilities, my wisdom, and my strength has come because I had walked with such good friends along the blessed corridors of Bapatla Agricultural College.

It is in this evocative background sketches the gang of twelve kicking an age which is in a hurry to run into the sixties headed to Pattaya in Thailand. Everyone sporting a boyish brio is there to tread the amazing beaches and taste the pleasures of bars and beauties of the Southeast Asian nation and the land of smiles.

As Iâ??m traveling along with other friends to reach the destination, upon everyoneâ??s face there is glow of thankfulness for the efforts of two of my friends who pitched in a lot of planning, caution, groundwork, and coordination that went before to make the whole four-day event full of fine things, and enjoying being together. Honestly, I felt itâ??s a magical chummy bonding at its most gladdened best.

Among us, two or three comrades for the next four days followed an unbroken protocol â?? the hands gripping the bottles with devotion and precision, the head always tilted back to facilitate the bitter contents of the bottle flow down their throats, and it amazed me the amount of alcohol their brief bellies could accommodate. Some enjoyed the luxury of good food, served in the tropical warmth. But for all us, the moment the night descends; itâ??s a naughty footloose consensus as Pattaya comes alive in its titillating best, bawdy colors, and sensual smells and roving down enjoying the best nightlife in Thailand.

Pattayaâ??s walking street, a kilometer-long street is the biggest and busiest hotspot, an addictive place that pushes one into lustful fantasies. It is so titillating and racy that the next three days the moment we finished our dinner when the clock struck eleven the feet seductively gyrated toward the â??walking streetâ?? a ten minutesâ?? drive from the hotel we stayed, on a phut-phut â?? a local carriage that could accommodate all twelve of us.

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The remarkable thing about the â??walking street,â?? there is so much to see and do, and itâ??s so densely packed on either side of a kilometer long street, bars of dancing girls, the go-go bars hundreds in number, restaurants, street food, music playing at ear-piercing volume. The neon-drenched strip has a buffet of nightlife entertainment with something for practically every person â?? sober or stoned.

Let me explain to you how it feels stepping in for the first time into Ã go-go bar and its dance floors.

It is well past midnight, there is pandemonium on the street overflowing with snoopy tourists â??shoulder to shoulder: curious, mad, unrestrained and raunchy, and once we step into a nightclub, its sheer madness at its erotogenic heights. It is a wall to wall people dancing to the music thumping so hard that my senses numbed and body seemed vibrating unusually the way which I never felt before. Beams of laser lights â?? in blues, greens, and yellows slashing the smoke-filled rooms, everyone seems to gyrate in a â??donâ??t careâ?? steamy relish. You find people sitting in hot eagerness hands holding the beer bottles and hungry eyes goggling at the pole dancing girls moving in graceful arcs, honest smiles, enduring eyes revealing the hard work, tough lives, and shocking stories behind them. The compact rooms, hours and hours of drinking bouts, the merrymakers gaping at the girls fluttering their silk veils hiding their features. As the night pushed past midnight it kicks up the romantic pilgrims into a giddy, sweaty and ridiculously lost and lustful lot. And Iâ??m told that the chaos, the craziness goes unabated until the wee hours.

I looked at myself: Iâ??m upbeat, enjoying the friends, though I enjoy the quietness, love being alone I seem relishing the crazy fun times, music, relaxed, unobtrusive moments, the music, the beats, the luxurious skirts, scanty tops and alluring swaying of the dancers.

I suffer from an irrational fear of water; I entertain a repulsive imagination that I should never end up in a watery grave. The fear would come to its frightening fore when Iâ??m up in air travel. I love walking on the sands I love beaches, its buoyant waves lashing the wet shores, I enjoy crowds thronging, rocking, splashing in the waves but I would never, ever, venture my feet step into the breaking waves, rather any water body.

I would stand at a distance eyes alert, holding my camera allowing myself the comforting warmth of the waves, wind, friends and wonder about the natural rhythms of nature and suspicious at the damaging potential it possesses.

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At breakfast, my pulse suddenly weakened when the morning schedule got announced: a boat trip to a local island. I could sense a knot of helplessness, and nervousness tightens on my face, which none of my friends, I guess, didnâ??t bother to notice. For a while I couldnâ??t move in my chair, dread held my legs rigid, even the morning cool ocean breeze didnâ??t help the sweat creeping all over.

The speed boat bumped through the waves for more than an hour, as I sat body rolled stiff, holding tight the railing watching intently at the bright red life jackets. As the boat gained the speed, the Pattaya skyline became hazier; my palms started hurting as Iâ??m gripped hard the safety bars. Iâ??m afraid any oversight Iâ??ll get tossed into swirling spears of waves looking like the mighty tongues of a mythical monster.

I have good faith in my friends, and trust in myself and relaxed and enjoyed the boat ride, it was a thrilling experience where I let go all my fears and I floated safely on the waves and the day ended with a scintillating encounter on a high sea.

Every day I carry huge emotional baggage, itâ??s tiresome, surely demands good doses of self-assurance to see things in the right perspective. But travel allows me to slow down a bit, see new people, experience a new culture; in these trips of travel I could see a new snapshot of myself every day, a fresher version of myself, and discover the best and brightest side of me and end up being a better self â?? a refreshed image of mine when I peep into a mirror held by a friend.

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1. Uncategorized

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