RANDOM THOUGHTS AND MY APARTMENT

Description

A meeting scheduled the next day morning at ten at Hyderabad, the capital of newly formed Telangana state. Itâ??s a six-hour bus ride to reach the place. There are many comfortable, luxurious buses to catch at any time. Not sure about the time, I chose to take a bus at past midnight.

By the time I reached the upgraded swanky bus stand well past midnight, Iâ??m nearly stunned by the enormous bustle playing below the brightly lit huge bus station compound. The whole place is crawling with buses of every kind. I could see hundreds of buses arriving and dislodging the tired commuters. And equal numbers were collecting the outward bound passengers eager to find their reserved places so that their midnight journey doesnâ??t disrupt their sleep.

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Waiting for my bus to arrive I slumped wearily in one of the not so comfortable chairs meant for waiting travelers. Night travelling is not my preferred choice for the journey. I always enjoyed day rides. Day travel allows me a feeling Iâ??m in control of the journey. I can relate to the landmark sites, enjoy the countryside. The brightness of a day gives me an unlimited space to dream and fantasize. These privileges never seem to count during when the bus is cruising in pitch black darkness.

I get in the bus and settle myself comfortably in my designated seat. No sooner the bus roared out of the bus depot than I feel amused surrounded by a chorus of snoring passengers. At the speed with which they quickly slipped into slumber. â??How lucky most of them are the way they switched to hurried sleep once in their seatsâ?• I frankly envied them. Itâ??s a funny feeling, the jealousy, about what others are enjoying and what Iâ??m not.

I make one failed attempt to doze off resting my head on the window, but the coldness of the window shocks me. Like many other passengers who were in various stages of sleepiness, I decideIâ??m not so lucky. Restless, I stare hard at the glass window into the world beyond the deep darkness. Without any warning, the twilighty nature of my existence stands before me. Iâ??m forced to live alone. I move about in leashless freedom. It is with a confusing pain I look into myself and conclude â??When I go out I find no one to inquire where and why Iâ??m going out, and when and how I would return.â?• Itâ??s this frightening freedom that disorients me to feel, â??At the end of the day I have no one there, at home waiting to receive me.â?•

Wherever I move out, I silently carry along with me my aloneness. It has been eighteen months since I started cohabiting with this deadly exile after my wife passed away. I take my morning coffee alone; I sit alone for lunch and dinner. I read alone, I meditate alone, and I walk out alone and return home alone. Today Iâ??m traveling alone. It sounds horrible and overwhelming.

â??You have to get used to it. Try to forget your wife slowly. Although tough, somehow you have to learn to blend with the reality. You have to think about the futureâ?• these are the pointless advice some of my friends try to rationalize with me. The delicate point here is memories and remembrances are not like dresses we wear every day and discard them at will. There grow inside us like mountains.

Three decades living together after marriage with Mani is awash with thousands of nostalgic facts, events, trips, narratives. I believed passionately to see them as one big celebration of my life. I hopefully assumed that it would go on and on for always. All along I trusted my wife would hold my hand and speak to me that everything will be okay. Now she left me with an alluding hint, â??You must walk alone your path now.â?•

I treat my friendâ??s views as a wasteful heap of hallow advise. They are unmindful that their empty words hurt me much more than the solitude Iâ??m gradually getting used.

Struggling for long six hours with a beast of loneliness and brutish insomnia I reach Hyderabad by daybreak.

I see my son waiting to receive me in his night garb. It is a five minutesâ?? drive to reach the apartment where he lives.

The car is snaking through the narrow road; I look at the shops that sell all conceivable stuff. Wares often picked up by most middle and marginal class families, who mostly populated here.

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The road has a peculiar significance: an oddest coming together of three institutions. One is the overloaded veterinary hospital carrying its brisk trade; standing adjacent to it is a hugely elaborate and well-maintained temple. And on the other side, we see a devotedly patronized mosque. No one disturbs the other. The dogs, the puppies, the buffaloes, at times the oddly sized hens visit and get themselves treated by local veterinarian practitioner. The devotees unmindful and tolerant of these mute animals suffering go about supplicating before their respective gods.

My apartment perched on the fourth floor. It is one among the conglomeration of three hundred apartment complex that came up twenty years ago. I bought it on the advice of some of my friends when Iâ??m spending more time in the city planning for my first international school.

Me and my wife Mani, together had planned, designed and brought about into life many huge buildings for our schools. But we never owned a house. The school itself is our place of professional work and a place to live. Literarily, we are born and raised in the school campuses. It includes my two children too. My school over decades became an inseparable skin of our lives.

For once Mani went around the whole rectangular five-storied structure, and she gave her nod immediately. We selected the fourth-floor apartment. The apartments were placed in independent rows, affording a good amount of privateness to the inmates. This exclusiveness element of the flats attracted both of us in one go.

Here our apartment looked like suspending in air. They stand like separate quarters, one beside the other with huge spaces in between. A slightly sloped ramp with steps reaches to the main front door and in turn, connects to a long corridor leading to the staircase and the lift facility. Once we stand on the small ramp, itâ??s like a huge open window to the sky. Below we could see a rectangular well touching the floors below revealing the parking lot. Our privacy hugely guaranteed.

This is the description of our flat. It has two bedrooms, a narrow kitchen, and all opening into a moderately sized hall. It has the main door leading to a guest-waiting place. I could say each room has its usefulness for romantically cozy living for a small family in a big city. But my favorite is the balcony

â?? a small sit-out for two.

Too many conversations, between me and my wife, the problems, academic matters, issues related to our children, the family disputes, school functions, financial issues the balcony nestled as a witness. I remember when my wife when diagnosed with cancer she had shared her apprehensions about the disease on the same balcony.

I enter into one of the bedrooms where I throw my baggage and books on the neatly set bed. I look at the unframed cupboard stacked with neatly folded dresses of my son.

Suddenly I slip into the melancholic past of twenty years. Let me tell you this: My wife and I sat together in the same room, two decades ago, for a propitious ritual celebrating owning our first house. I remember a few teachers of the local branch also joined our prayers.

Today, lying on the bed, I ruminate how the erratic fate flung its ominous whip to harass me. The same room is now holding a framed portrait of my wife fastened to the wall. Staring at it blankly, a whiff of hurt stings me. A shapeless pain hammers in my mind. And I murmer wordlessly, â??This pain and loneliness are real, unending and terrifying.â?•

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Unable to deal with choking emotions I take few steps into the balcony. In the adjoining bedroom, I notice my grandson Kaushal in a deep sleep. In the balcony, I could feel the morning breeze. I could see four floors below the city slowly preparing itself for, perhaps, harder day. Itâ??s always crowded and tense. Bustling and honking. From a distance, I could hear the temple bells ringing as if spreading around the blessed charms. I could see children in a hurry to join the assembly session in the school tucked in the far corner of the road below.

Four floors above Iâ??m far removed from this frenzy, pressure, and strife. But I stand alone to face one more day. It is difficult for anyone to know what Iâ??m going through. When I look down, I could notice how the ordinary ones are attending their chores in good cheer. What about me. I know what I want. I have the best resources to beat any human condition. Let me not allow these melancholy moods stand in my way. Let me relax in these memories and enjoy the new bundle of joys with which my grandson would gladden me. I look at him deep in his sleep. And his soft, tender face has all the answers I want.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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