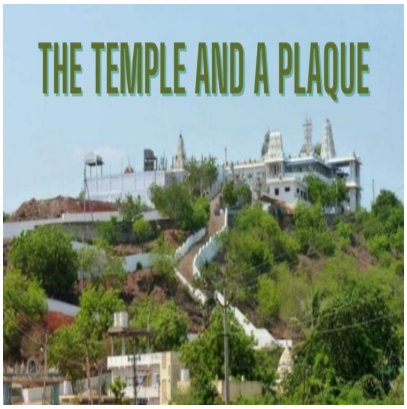


THE TEMPLE AND A PLAQUE

Description

default watermark

(I entered the temple after twenty-five years. There, I chanced upon a two-foot rectangular plaque set in the ornate wall. The sense of mute emotions it had evoked when I ran my hands over the black slab was something I canâ??t explain in a few words.)

Forty-five days is indeed too long a period for an impulsive photographer to stay indoors resisting the prickling fingers to press the click button? I eyed the whole bulge of the camera kit huddled in one corner, untouched, unclicked, not sure when I get up to feel strong enough driving to the city outskirts â?? to chase the morning Sun, the late wintry breeze.

I had my health issues to comply with and, coupled with lingering fears of Covid, caused me to stay the past month indoors, huddled with books as the predominant past-time. Post-retirement days never troubled me as I devoted measured hours planned at reading, writing, and photography, which correlated well with my mind, soul, and body. I felt assured my ethos never betrayed the satisfaction I derived in my manner: I live all by myself â?? never missed the dawn colours and twilight hues.

Iâ??m more a visual wayfarer, feel relaxed deep inside when lost in the outdoors, backpack making my breath heavy, hiking as unworried as farm animals grazing in the openness. Photography has been, for sure, a refresher both for my body and build-in artistry. Once I stepped out, tripod pitched, I get carried away by a magical sensation where my feet craves for shimmering profiles of nature and my eyes to listen to the little sights the camera lens hold: the sunsets, the sunrises, the skies, ponds, trees and blades of grassesâ??all, seen blending in many hues in harmony. I see in many joyful ways how nature converges and emerges as an aesthetic, more romantic, and overwhelming, where I realize the urge to capture the sights with a ton of zeal calling in urgency like itâ??s seen in hot romantic couples.

Celebrating the time off, I breathed some energy into my lazy feet that Sunday morning, a few days back where I saw myself at the foot of a hill, a thirty minutesâ?? drive from my home. The road that snakes up on to the hill buried a sentimental episode for me to relate. Itâ??s about an incident that happened, though I remind myself as an insignificant act then and long back. But when I visited the place after many years, I felt something unexplainable; I paused with surging emotions for a while; my mood suddenly dipped low, and the past showed itself in a stream of faint thoughts.

Hereâ??s how my memories unfurled on that day.

In early 1995, it had been five years since my dad passed away. Those were the days I had struggled to bypass many hurdles to hold tight the schoolâ??s reins of administration, which my father had established. As a thirty-five-year managerial novice, it seemed a challenging task. On one occasion, I was asked to contribute to a temple construction on a nearby hill, which I grew up imagining climbing when I was a kid. For which I agreed, with little hesitation, to donate seventy-five thousand rupees. Then the temple was small and insignificant, and no proper path to reach. Years went by, but I had never gotten an occasion to visit the place. However, every year I have been receiving invitations to take part in the regular festivals organized, which I read are popular, and devotees overflowed.

Twenty-five years later, today, I parked my car in a well-maintained space. At first glance, I took a moment to contain my awe, to guess the scene conveyed before me: the colors of mythical charm spread everywhere. Itâ??s as magical as it was surprising to see the magnitude of glory and majestic temple complex. The remarkable manner it has expanded throughout the decades and which Iâ??m not aware of. I walked up the steps with thoughts still in an unbelievable spell. I saw neatness all around. Pristine and religious devotedness shined at every corner, itâ??s brilliantly colored and reverential idols placed in the richly built shrines.

default watermark

I entered the small temple that stood at the massive religious complexâ??s entrance. It looked like a pious lotus flower blossomed from a sanctimonious seed sown twenty-five years back. I moved in muted surprise around this testimony, reflecting the hollowed efforts put in place, long ago, by unknown devotees. As I started enjoying the fragrance of incense, hearing the chimes and chants, I strolled in quiet steps. Itâ??s when I recognized a two-foot rectangular black plaque set in the ornate wall somewhere in the corner. Thrilled and excited, I touched the coolness of the black slab, and my fingers traced, with fluid surprise in my eyes, the engraved name of my father and found below it the names of my two brothers and mine. The year printed: 1995. At that moment, I realized Iâ??m looking at a priceless memento of acknowledgment, of trust. Being honest, I have long forgotten the deed, and never in my remote dreams expected, in any day in the future, will it remind me that the charity ever happened? And here it is the image of faith: suddenly it has become my muse, like a prayer, like a soft song of spring, humming and breathing my fatherâ??s name. I assumed, perhaps, that he had decided to stay here in the sanctum, looked after by the Devine gracefulness â?? to live forever.

The gentleman who associated himself in collecting the donations two decades ago, I learned, had died in an accident long back during a festival at the temple. That he fell on live electric wires while erecting the pandals around the shrine. I wondered, God and devotion never interfere, never adjourn the time, the spontaneity, and manner of our death. And allegiance to Almighty in whichever passion we announce it is no guaranteeing to foolproof us from the fangs of fatality. I closed my eyes for a moment: remembered my father and that martyred devotee.

I circled the shrines for about two hours. The camera perched on the tripod focused not on the decorated towers, pillars, and arches of the temple, but spread below at the hill the careless creeping of the suburbs. Early in the morning, itâ??s the city hidden under the blanket of fog and partially allowing the golden rays to slash down and lay as a yellowish veil upon the wanton concrete splurge â?? the boxed residential structures.

Category

1. Places

Date Created
2021/01/30
Author
eswarnadipalli

default watermark