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Why We Travel

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“An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered.

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—G. K. Chesterton, “All Things Considered”

Every trip I am ordained with begins with a jerk—followed by a psychological tussle—an inconvenience, so to say. Rarely do my eyes cross the margin of 12am. But the Mussoorie evening was unusually so. At around 6.30 in the next morning when I reached Roorkee bus stop to board a Dehradun-bound vehicle, the deserted land proudly announced her indifference—local bus-strike to my dismay. Before my haplessness surmounted an inch and tore down my venture, a TATA Sumo took the spotlight and gave cozy comfort for next two hours in exchange of forty rupees. A walk followed from where I left the shuttle, and my roaming eyes wandered until I picked up my ticket at Dehradun Station Bus Depot and rested my butt on the front seat of a bus en route to the Queen of the Hills. What say!

Am I travelling? Or journeying? I am often interrogated by this sly duality. If travelling connotes moving from one place to another, journeying is much profound phenomenon accompanying each of us endlessly, from one destination to another, to a new



journey. Journey widens the corridors of self-reflection; self-assessment gets identified within. If travelling implies a geographical shift and specifies destination, the thrill of journey lies deep within and directs us to the destination sans reaching it. If it is important “where we visit” for a trip, journey hardly counts geographical length and relies on knowing the unknown. Sometimes the world’s most celebrated dictionary fails to limn the significance of a word, because it is too correct. Google hardly helps. How can other know what you feel unless it is equally felt? We journey every living moment, without quite realizing it, into the mysteries within our soul. It adds newness to our existence, as we move on. Journey makes us gleeful and creative, which in turn incites us to unriddle our ceaseless travel-mania.

A bus journey for an hour alone with steep valley and numerous curves appetized my mental stomach. It gladdened my imagination as well. Among the town’s two transport points, Library end was less crowded in comparison to Picture Palace. However, tourists prefer the latter for lodging accessibility. I did the contrary to savour the Mall road from top to toe and naturally chose Library end to be my point of escape. With double-luggage—one in back, another in hand—I set out.

Picture Palace to Library end is a walking distance of some two kilometers. Open air, adorable sky and warm people. If one visits here with his partner, he will reincarnate a new status. And if one is single, he will be much delighted. Of all Indian hill stations, Mussoorie whistles the most romantic lullaby—

Where soul meets destiny, girls meet boys,

Colours get vibrant, and Nature rejoices;



Where we walk for walk's sake, some for eyes,
A few among happiness, the rest towards skies;
Where charm in waves, love in hearts,
You find sweetness in cherry-nuts;
Where in dappled tops, denim trousers and pencil heels
Soul reveals.

Cliff Richards is always around the corner. In terms of Western music listeners' battle in India Shillong is (mythically) perhaps the only competitor to Mussoorie. Shop owners are quite aware of the score and genre they listen to; if you ask about the song in advanced communication, they let you know even the title of the album. Most of them are mannered and well-dressed. Hills people are fashionable, always. Mussoorie congregates diversity in unusual harmony. Better to avoid vacations and visit during March-April to relish that harmony. The town still echoes the British feet in the Indian way—I stayed there to restore myself in one of the heritage benches by the pathway and spend time in seclusion watching the sky-making beyond regular hassle. Mussoorie delineates a distinctive aroma: chilly morn, cozy day, cool afternoon and evening gossip!

Is travelling a primal desire of mankind rooted beneath our consciousness? Is it a pleasure principle which chisels our vision? Is it something that makes us 'free' and propels our identity formation? Or, is it merely a vacation for a different view, a break from today's rolling society? All these culminate into one while we journey. Does it happen only when we move on to a new place to discover the world? Or, it revolves around us as we venture



towards new senses every now and then? The subtle opposition between ‘travelling’ and ‘journeying’ compels me to owe to Ruskin Bond: “. . . the pleasure of travel is in the journey, and not so much in reaching one’s destination. Destinations rarely live up to the traveler’s expectations.”

What kind of happiness does it offer then? Emancipation from repressed thoughts? As we go on to explore new places, new phases peep in to enlighten ourselves, and to our satiation we experience psychic joy.