

It All Begins with a Promise!

Many a friends questioned my sensibility when I declared my intention to run 21 km at the young age of 58. My bypass surgery in the past was an added bonus for naysayers. All my runner friends were encouraging as expected. Such is the case with all adventure sports. There is a strong element of self-doubt and optimism at the same time. There is an element of adventure and caution at the same time. Why do it and why not are eternal questions.

For me, adventure is the outer limit of fitness where mind becomes more important than matter. You wish to enter a zone of discomfort and even some risk of injury to bring forth your subconscious self. The reservoir of your body and mind which you never use. It is a journey of self-discovery. Unless you challenge yourself, you will not know your own body and mind. It is a Zen experience.

Running and adventure sports...

The Journey Begins...

Once you decide to walk on an adventurous path, you need to follow the process stated below:

1. Make a resolve
2. Seek guidance
3. Practice
4. Final preparation for the race or event
5. Let go. Run for fun. Do not look at others.

To begin with, I am not a preacher. Not advising you but sharing my journey. This ode begins with thanks to my co-runners, Dr. Utkrant Kurlekar, Dr. Balasaheb Pawar, Dr. Yogesh Panchwagh, Dr. Ramesh Kulkarni, Dr. Mahesh Kulkarni, and many; my co-divers Dr. Ashish Babhulkar and Dr. Hemant Wakankar, Aniruddha Herlekar, and many; my co-trekkers Dr. Sunil Bapat, Dr. Padma Karve, Dr. Manjiri Joshi, Dr. Kedar Joshi, and many; and my co-birders Vaibhav Deshmukh, Vinod Bartakke, Vinayak Halbe, Pramod Patil, and many.

I am me and you are you and we are not together. Not asking you to follow, but to think and muse.

Today Is the Day of Resolution

You convert a dream into a goal. Your dream should not be foolish or unattainable. As a basic rule, anything that a man of your age has done, you can do. I wanted to start scuba diving after my heart surgery. The fear of the unknown was of course there. I went on the Internet to check whether you can do scuba after bypass, and there was a site of divers who are regularly doing scuba after bypass and of course how to go about.

Dreams and goals are very precious in life. Life is colorless without dreams and boring without goals. If you don't run

a marathon, you are unlikely to run 21 or 42 km on your own. The target drives you, the fellow racers motivate you.

Yet, the most difficult step is to convert a dream into a goal. Once you make that resolve, there is no turning back. Greatness is not achieved by dreaming, but by converting them into goals and realizing them. The biggest enemy is self-doubt. It is fueled by naysayers and many time negated by family members or by spouse. You can discuss decision sensibility issues with those who matter before making a resolution. You may or may not require consent, but you will definitely need their support. Adventure is much more fun when people support you and much less when they doubt you. You need to work on getting your dear ones on board. But your greatest enemy is yourself. Your doubt kills you from inside. You start asking opinions and get them the way you want them to be. You need support and encouragement, not opinion by a person who has never been there.

What is a resolve.... It is a commitment made by you, to yourself, to do a good and difficult deed. You don't need a resolve for bad deeds. They come in naturally. But to do a good and difficult deed is not easy. It needs a steely resolve. A promise which will not be broken.

As Ela Wheeler Wilcox says in her poem "Resolve:"

"Thou hast but to resolve, and lo! God's whole Great universe shall fortify thy soul!"

A resolve needs sacrifice.... Once you want to achieve a difficult task, you need to sacrifice a great amount of time from your busy schedule. Preparation is the key, and it demands time and effort. To climb the Everest, you need to sacrifice 2 years of life to reach there, not knowing the end result.

Is Your Resolve Solid...?

People, who go back on their word, devalue themselves. Other people won't care whether you keep your word or not, you should. What is your word worth? Did you give it your best? The journey and sincerity matters. Excuses don't. You can fool others, never fool yourself.

The adventure begins with a promise. And the promise determines the final outcome. People have gone to the Everest three times to make one successful climb. Be it a business venture or to give up smoking or alcohol or running marathon, climbing mountains, or any wild dream. It begins with just a solid promise.

Train Your Mind

As an adventure needs training of the body, resolves need training of the mind. It has always been and always will

be mind over matter. You, like me, are not racing against others now, not in this field outside of your expertise, but you are racing against your previous self. Bringing out the strength and reserves inside of your own self. Hence, resolve becomes everything. You make small goals as your resolves, accomplish them with discipline, and build confidence into yourself. As your resolve becomes steelier, your confidence is palpable and contagious. This translates into better work output in your career. Your success outside of your comfort zone, trains your mind and body to take risks, to accept challenges, and to excel in your profession.

It is indeed transcendental meditation for you.

All battles are won in the courageous minds

Alas lost by timid hearts at times

There are no limits to your self

Except the boundaries you create for yourself

Yours is the victory and yours is the sky

If you wish to break the chains

That bind you to earth

It all begins with a solemn promise

It all depends on how much steel is in it.

Seek Guidance before You Start

I am not talking about spiritual or philosophical guidance. That is deep and also not easily available. We are not addressing the “why” here; we are focusing on how to go about. Once you have decided to walk on a given path, seek practical guidance to reach the destination in a safe and predictable manner.

People are not guiding you; you are guiding yourself by dipping into other people’s experiences. In very daunting ventures, like Ironman, or Ultraman races, you will even require professional guidance and help. But, in the end, it is up to you to go out and seek the best guidance possible. A well-sought guidance has a profound impact on the outcome.

Before you start any adventurous sport or a life venture wherein risk is involved, it is important to seek guidance for the following very simple reasons:

1. Why reinvent the wheel?
2. Risk, when badly taken, demands a price not worth paying
3. Some injuries or failures are not reversible
4. Internet guidance can be misleading; hence, you need a colleague or role model to guide you.

To give you the simplest of the example, after I ran my first-ever 21-km race, my ileo-tibial band was hurting near both knees and I had no idea when it would stop. My running friends laughed and told me to do a small recovery run and to my utter surprise, the pain disappeared and I was able to run 5 km easily the day after.

People are more than willing to help, but we are not open to receiving. Meet and ask for help from as many people as you may find. It adds to your knowledge, gives you a perspective, and puts you under an obligation to proceed and perform. The advice you get is not at all binding upon you, it gives you freedom to choose and time to prepare.

When you want to run a long distance, you need to train your muscles, train your heart and find the sweet spot of correct pace, understand about diet and hydration, learn how to pace your run, and how much to run on practice days....

For every adventure in life, there is intense preparation and before every preparation, there should be correct strategy borne from study and timely guidance.

I have no authority or expertise to discuss issues pertinent to professional sportsman or adventurous careerists; this writing by me is mostly pertaining to professionals in other fields, taking a risk outside of their knowledge and comfort zone. Hence, what is essentially at stake is not just your personal safety but also safety of your regular career and of your family. You are a regular guy, somebody who has already achieved something in life, who now wants liberation via adventure, without risking it all, and herein lies the importance of guidance. You must seek guidance from a professional athlete as well as from others like you who are outsiders.

You need inputs on diet and nutrition; on exercise in terms of intensity, frequency, duration, rest, and recovery; time of preparation; correct gear and apparel; and overall strategy to finally do it easily and successfully.

In the final battle of the *Mahabharat*, Lord Krishna without his weapons turned out to be far more valuable than his entire army on the other side. Even in the face of war, advice and strategy are more important than the army itself. That is the value of correct and timely advice.

In the end, you are not alone, you are not the first, and yet you are unique as others have never been in the same position as you are, and hence learn from others, modify as it suits you, and create your own unique adventure.

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