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CAN MODI DISLODGE KEJRIWAL?

WAYANAD LANDSLIDE
ONE MAN'S HEARTBREAK, AND HOPE

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THE WEEK

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Four months after he lost his family in the Wayanad landslide, **Kalathingal Noufal** opened a restaurant in their memory. This is his story of heartbreak and hope

BY ANJULY MATHAI/MEPPADI
PHOTOS BY SANJOY GHOSH



One supercalifragilisticexpialidocious New Year

Once Christmas is over, tension mounts in our home as the little woman and I start ticking off the days. We both remain on edge because we dread the coming of the New Year—a time when the whole world goes crazy and adopts resolutions. We, too, make New Year promises and our ‘list of past resolutions’ is very long and impressive. Unfortunately, we are complete failures at keeping them and our ‘list of resolutions not kept’ is equally long and equally impressive.

The resolutions of past years fall in four categories. Those that only I had to keep, like shaving every day; those that only the missus had to keep, like not biting her nails; those that both of us had to keep, like visiting our friends more regularly. Sadly, at the end of every year, the report has always been: I did not. She did not. We did not. The fourth category is lofty, aspirational stuff—healthy eating, exercising, losing weight, saving money, watching less TV and similar wishful thinking. Without fail, all such resolutions are dead and buried by the middle of January, year after year.

The sense of failure was so acute that I started suffering from RMD—Recurring Mid-January Depression—a common malady among weak-willed people who see their magnificent resolutions shatter a week or two into the New Year. Being aware of my annual despondency, last year my wife advised me to keep things simple. “Why not resolve to do things that even an imbecile could? Like not leaving a damp towel in the wardrobe. Or not throwing your smelly socks under the bed. Simple stuff. Easy-peasy!”

I wasn’t too sure if the missus was deriding me or if she had some villainous hidden agenda, so I diplomatically ignored her

suggestion. However, I secretly resolved to improve my writing skills by never starting a sentence with the word ‘however’ or ‘and,’ nor to use short cryptic sentences and to use less exclamation marks! I also had a vicinal pertinaciousness to eschew pompous phraseology, no matter how supercalifragilisticexpialidocious it sounded. And by mid-January? Again... poof!

A couple of weeks ago, on New Year’s Eve, I once again sat morosely, thinking about my long experience in failing at keeping resolutions. The missus sat nearby, biting her nails.

“What stupid New Year resolutions are you going to make this time?” she asked. Somehow, her favourite word seems to be ‘stupid’ when she talks to me.

I hummed and hawed for a short while, but before I could think of a safe answer, she suggested, “This year, why don’t we resolve to do such things at which we simply can’t fail?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you could resolve to continue drinking whisky, but to enjoy it rather than feeling guilty. I could resolve to take a third helping of ice cream without needing to make some silly excuse. And so on. You get the general idea? There might be room for improvement, but must we improve? After all, there is something called self-acceptance! Why must we strive to become fitter, healthier, more spiritual or morally superior than we are? Why can’t we be us? To hell with New Year resolutions!”

I was nonplussed. Had she been snorting something that she shouldn’t have? Or was I hallucinating? She was suggesting ignoring

ILLUSTRATION JOB P.K.

