

Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow

- Manish Shetty



First Sunrise of 2021

This morning, it is time to wave off 2020 but it still feels like there is something unaccounted for. The sun rose with great punctuality as the Shettys opened their blinds with great vigor. But today, 2021 feels like turning 21 or like sweet 16; it feels like turning back the universal clock and getting younger with age. Maybe it's because we want to go back to 2019 or 2018. It seems to bring with it an energy field that has "Don't Just ..." sprayed across the horizon. But what's different? My coffee is the same and so is my bad posture as I type this.

A torpedo-like pandemic, itching masks, and 365 days of recursion later, I deliberate over what's old, what's new, and what's changed. But I realize that 2021 isn't going to be about questioning things. We tried that last year, failed to answer almost everything, and came down on our knees. We climbed the steps to enlightenment just to realize there are more to climb. Well, we knew that when we saw the first step. Didn't we?

I fought battles against the truth and let myself believe the lies I was spewing. I questioned my surroundings to provide answers to my own. With what little time was left, I buried it in accomplishing something every day to forge a guarantee for the next. I used 'lockdown' as a reason for not wanting to do things I would have loved to do. Yes, we were forced to turn our homes into cages. But that did not mean we were to lie about what's within and what's out there.

To begin 2020, I wore my heart on my sleeve and then quickly overdid it. Well, it was my first fresh attempt to

do so in a long time. I can cut myself some slack for that. I let things sway and carry me from one shore to another. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed each emotion as it passed. But it was too frequent and I wasn't strapped in to take it all in.

This past year also began with making real connections with a select few. The year ended, just like others in the past, with fewer by my side. Unlike other times, I am not disheartened at this result. It is merely a portrayal of the choices I have made throughout the year and it's time to come to terms with it. I can remember being one person for as long as I have lived - practical, logical, and fair. These are attributes I inherited from my experiences of yesterday. I was most in touch with them in 2020 and realized how they limit my experience of today. I have lived by them like they were never to change; like I'd be fined to break the code-of-conduct I unknowingly set for myself.

*"The past is always tense,
the future perfect."*

— Zadie Smith

This year, I will not chase love, happiness, productivity, enlightenment, or excellence. *This year, I will not chase at all.* I will not aim to be a better son, a better friend, or a better me. I will not spend the majority of my time thanking, apologizing, or reacting to things that happen to me. I will not exhaust my efforts trying to prove what I am to myself. I will not try hard to feel things that I don't and unnecessarily question things.

Instead, I will let 2021 *be about choice*; choices I make and that of others. In that regard, I owe myself to be honest; honest to my peers, family, and myself. I will change every day, be a new person, and not have myself question it. I will interact, experience more, and feel whole again. This year, I will simplify.

This year ...

Don't just change, transform.
Don't just criticize, encourage.
Don't just relate, advocate.
Don't just exist, live.
Don't just hope, do.
Don't rush, okay?