

MAY - 2005

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FUN IN THE SUN!

*We're all going on a summer holiday
No more working for a week or two
Fun and laughter on our summer holiday
No more worries for me or you
For a week or two
- Cliff Richard*

Welcome to the world of summer holidays! In the 1960s Cliff Richard, leading a band of singing youths sang 'Summer Holiday', a famous song of the era (also a film starring Richard in the lead). This lighthearted romantic film beautifully captured and presented the saga of a singing quartet seeking adventure holidays against the backdrop of European scenic beauty. The scorching sun heralds the warmth of the approaching holiday season.

As the resplendent sun crosses the celestial equator on the vernal equinox (22nd March) and as the early arrival of the solar beams shortens the nights, our mind starts wandering beyond the stressful present. It conjures up images of green hills holding long winding rivers offering a lakeside view to the observer. The young ones dream about long hours of sleep and days filled with, "all work and no play". The more enterprising and adventurous yearn for a long trek up the hills, working out plots to build castles in air – something to brag about later. All in all one tries to forget the crises at hand – the exams, the targets, the deadlines lose their terror edge.

But one cannot spend the long summer only roaming about in the countryside. For as soon as the holidays end, a new work schedule, a new semester, which is a period of hectic activity, will again commence. Therefore one has to be very careful, in planning the vacation. Be it long or short, you have to make the most of it, since the time clock is irreversible in every sense of the term. The key is to evolve a plan which will be a mix of experiential learning and fun so that at the end you can have the best of both – or else it will just be another wasted opportunity to enrich oneself.

A Google search throws up thousands of holiday plans for youth worldwide. While the cost and the locations may vary, the Indian youth have thousands of options or plans to choose from. The schedules offer hiking, biking, trekking, adventure sports, kayaking, jungle trails and a whole range of outbound experiences, with camping and campsites ranging from the Himalayan Mountains to the sands of Kerala. There are also interesting plans for learning foreign languages, yoga, ayurveda as well as meditation and spiritual enlightenment. These are accompanied by family travel and stay concessions as well as guided tours so as to offer a holistic fare to all. Quite a rich menu to choose from!

But everyone has to take a balanced view weighing opportunities against cost, fun vis-à-vis learning and pain against gain. For example a trek in the Himalayas may be an interesting proposition but it may be too tough an adventure for someone who hasn't yet climbed a molehill in his backyard. The call of the beaches is very exciting but a dip in the ocean is permissible provided you know how to swim. A course in Russian language may be interesting but your comfort level in your medium of instruction and your mother tongue is critical before one leaps to fancy. Thus one has to temper wild thoughts with reality and work out a feasible and yet holistic summer vacation plan. Only then will you be benefited by the exposure and the family would be enriched by the effort.

Very often I remember the advice of my parents who would ensure that the summer vacation is spent in reading classics from all languages, which are often beyond the scope of academics. Be it "Fables from Aesop" or "the Gems of English prose" or the works of Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Rabindranath Tagore or the works of great mystics like Sant Tukaram, Dnyaneshwar and Ramdas, they have immensely enriched my thought process. The elder's advice to prepare oneself before the beginning of the new semester is applicable to one and all. The summer learning's are not only to be adopted for the 9th or 11th standard vacation period, but also to be followed as work ethic lifelong.

So while you are working hard at your studies and work schedules, spare a thought for the summer vacation and plan it well so that it doesn't become another boring or wasteful period in your life. So finish your studies and work and be ready to put on your dancing shoes in tune with the inimitable Cliff Richard!

*So we're going on a summer holiday
To make our dreams come true
For me and you
For me and you*