

A LEARNING ADVENTURE

For about a decade I have been doing “Learning Adventure” programmes (OBT with a focus on learning about organisations and challenging oneself). Our culture does not encourage “adventure” as part of growing up in the school and college years. This often creates severe limitations in otherwise competent managers. When faced with unfamiliar and potentially dangerous situations they panic instead of “digging within to discover new levels of courage and resilience”.

We had taken a group of middle managers to an adventure location. The group came in at sunset and walked the last mile into the camp site. There was the usual “fun and bantering” of a group that is anxious but not admitting to the anxiety. The anchor for the “adventure” part of the camp gave the usual talk about outdoors and the nature of the camp location etc. We were in fairly wild country, Bandipur. Bears were definitely around. Elephants could come by. As the briefing proceeded, the “camp” grew more silent but not for long! The banter started as darkness rolled in, No televisions to provide a distracting crutch, no familiar props of city life.

A night vigil regimen was set up. Dinner and the participants talked a bit and went to sleep. All was peaceful. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, we were woken up by screams and shouts. Something was wrong in Tent 3. Instantly, all the torches in the camp went on, every one rushed to Tent 3. To the embarrassment of the tent 3 group, the person who was supposed to hand over the “night vigil” tried to gently unzip the front flaps of the tent and wake up only the two people who would take over. He was trying to be very considerate. The tent 3 group had decided before going to sleep that they could not rely on the “camp management” (US organisers) for their safety. The tents looked awfully thin! They piled up all their suitcases against the entrance after zipping it up!! So they decided to put up a bulwark against the bears!! Our considerate friend tipped all the bags over as he quietly tried to open the entrance flaps! The rest was pandemonium followed by relief, followed by great hilarity!