

So how do you want it to end...?

50 million people tuned in to watch Rachel, Joey, Chandler, Monica, Phoebe and Ross for one last time. This immensely popular sitcom defined a generation of people around the world that identified it. My generation. For us, it represented friendships, struggles a search for life partners, children and happiness as we made the long journey from our 20s to our 30s. For the cast of Friends, it was an immensely fulfilling journey that while entertaining us, made them rich beyond their wildest imaginations, and resulted in five deep meaningful friendships for each of them. The ending was poignant but happy.



Photo credit: NBC

Some other things came to an end, a little differently. Ronald Reagan, one of America's most loved Presidents, slipped away. His memorable farewell by a world that adored him will not be seen too often in my lifetime. Ray Charles, the father of soul was silenced, but his music lives on.

My grandfather passed away last week. One of the last Nehruvians, a father of the farm revolution in India, he passed away surrounded by his family, loved yet unsung at his own wish. He created many of India's modern farm institutions. As his energy, his eyes and ultimately his time deserted him, he went, his work not yet complete, his life somewhat unfulfilled.

The BITSConnect project came to an end too. Thousands of alums created the Neuron network that liberated the minds of future BITSians. But in the ending we saw a new beginning. We named "BITSConnect" for the series of future initiatives that would connect us to BITS. The legacy of what we have started will live on.

One very successful woman found fulfillment in a new beginning. On December 25, 2002, Oprah threw a massive, different kind of party. Where

the glitterati of Hollywood wasn't invited. In the deepest, poorest parts of South Africa, she flew plane loads of toys to wish a merry Christmas to 50,000 of the world's most deprived children, many orphans, many victims of AIDS. Oprah said that on that day, she finally found purpose in her life. One of the world's most successful women found fulfillment by looking into the eyes of those who didn't even know her name. Oprah has begun scripting a new ending for herself.

I have begun to study such endings more closely. They say life is a marathon, but I feel my journey is passing by in a blur, accelerating as I get older.

As I see periods, people, legacies, legends, institutions come to an end, I believe the journey is not about winning, or even completing it, but about having a really good run. Which I interpret as attaining some sense of fulfillment.

As the finish line draws near, today, tomorrow or 50 years from now, when we run past the ticker tape that waits at the end, I think the question we should ask – did we enjoy it? Was it enriching? Fulfilling? Worthwhile?

A BITS Pilani education gave us a great passport not just to begin this journey, but to make it more meaningful. It gave us the opportunities to run many different paths, take new routes, do new things. In spite of this incredible passport, if our journey remains unenriching, unfulfilled, unsatisfying, it would indeed be unfortunate.

When we were 18, in the clouds of alcohol (and at times ganja) immersed in the sounds of Led Zeppelin and Bob Dylan, we debated these questions. Maybe we should reach out to those peers and classmates and ask them this question again. "How do you want it to end? Are you fulfilled. Are you ready?"

And I am sure that in some corner of this vast BITSAA network, we may find some (clear-headed) answers.

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