

Seaside Citadel

Although several incomprehensibilities are associated with life, an undeniable truth exists: It is full of mystery and wonder. We create opportunities that favour our desire to chase dreams, forge relationships, and pursue our passions, all while hoping that everything we make will endure eternally. But life, being the mischievous and marvellous entity, swoops in to remind you that nothing lasts forever. The Seaside Citadel invites us into this paradox, a celebration of what is fleeting, a validation of what is enduring.

The Tibetan Buddhist practice of making and dismantling sand castles parallels this idea. "The mandala's creation and consecration is believed to benefit beings, while their destruction serves as a reminder of their ephemerality of life and the impermanence of all things."¹ The sacred art of making something with the understanding that it might vanish without a trace is proof of tenacious intent, yet therein lies the beauty of your desire to recreate it again. Despite the erratic waves, the sand mandala and the Citadel recognize the grace in impermanence. Likewise, continue on your voyage, carrying the invaluable weight of experiences gained and memories made.

Just as every wave steers the Citadel onto a new route and does not guarantee that it will remain the same, each experience in your life is transformative, and the wisdom you gain shapes your ambitions. The experience can stem from anything: a long-term goal you set, a groundbreaking idea, a genuine bond, or your passion. Does this ordeal diminish the value of your aspirations? Quite the opposite. The value of your aspirations lies not in enduring the storm but in the joy of building, dreaming, playing, and moving forward despite the storm.

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Recall the quote, "Hold fast, Perseus. Brave the storm that was made to break us, for we are unbreakable." The Seaside Citadel encapsulates an idea that surges outward like this storm, moving hearts and minds, a reminder that our contributions to knowledge and culture are like waves shaping the sands of our collective understanding. The Citadel honours the resilience required to withstand times of uncertainty and the fortitude needed to dream. Living the dream is understanding that life may change and evolve with the wave of time. This unboastful Citadel is a metaphor for adaptability and innovation, the delight found in creation despite its destruction by forces known and unknown. With that in mind, consider the ultimate binge machine: Netflix. Much like the Citadel adapting to the tide rolling in and out, Netflix has changed with the currents of time. It has progressed from DVD rentals to streaming services and developed original content in response to consumer demands. Through this lens, the Seaside Citadel encourages us to stop and ponder: What if the measure of satisfaction lies in creating rather than having a finished product? Speaking of Netflix, ready for some drama? Let us shift gears and explore a different story, one where the joy of creating takes the spotlight. J.R.R. Tolkien transformed *The Lord of the Rings* into a decades-long, obsessive enterprise.

In his imaginative world, he found joy, and fame came by to throw him laurels. In this world where results are prioritised above everything else, pursuing an outcome becomes second nature. However, such passion transforms even the most arduous efforts into fulfilling ventures, reminding us that when we enjoy the journey, the destination takes care of itself.

When it comes to enjoying the journey, few experiences in life rival college life. Consider working on a group project: the long hours, endless debates, and sleepless nights. But in the end, what could have seemed like tedious work would result in one of the most treasured memories, not in terms of the grade obtained, but of the creativity unleashed and the joy you had with those involved. In the same way, landing a prestigious job or passing an exam with flying colours might be what this Citadel is for you. However, the tide of life has its rhythm. Rejections and diversions are not setbacks but waves that help you become stronger and more adaptive.

Much in the same fort as surviving a group project, the Seaside Citadel reminds us that the real reward is the chaos, the learning, and maybe a few "what just happened?" moments along the way. Take into account the omnipresent doctrines of philosophy and psychological endurance. As Albert Camus examined in the Myth of Sisyphus, life may seem absurd in its endless obstacles. Often, you can discover your purpose through the act of perseverance. Psychologically, it resonates with the growth mindset, embracing change and learning from a modest Citadel.

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Think of Michelangelo, who chiselled a vision rather than merely marble. He is celebrated as one of history's most beloved artists and sculptors, famously stating, "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." His most widely recognized sculptural and painted classic, the Sistine Chapel, took him four years to create. His works are masterpieces carved from imperfection through meticulous thought and tolerance — The beauty of the process and the belief that steadfast efforts can ripple through time.

Well, how do you cope with constant change? Do you resist it or adapt to it and evolve? Making a masterpiece is not too different from figuring out life. It is messy, unpredictable, and generally involves chipping away at the bits that do not work. You can learn to dance with the tide instead of building walls to keep it at bay. There is a famous saying: "Rome wasn't built in a day." James Clear and John Heywood came up with different interpretations of the quote. The former wrote, "Rome wasn't built in a day, but they were laying bricks every hour. You don't have to build everything you want today, just lay a brick." The latter mused, "Rome wasn't built in a day, but it burned in one."

Both interpretations of the saying, in its grandeur and tragedy, whisper truths that resonate with the Seaside Citadel. The quest for innovation undeterred by the tides is not a folly but a declaration of life itself, a testament of hope. It compels us to view our endeavours in a much fonder light, with reverence for the courage it takes to begin again and again. The exquisite labour of inventing purely for the experience and pursuing some stray thought just because it intrigues you is meaningful for your journey.

One might claim that verse best captures the spirit of the Seaside Citadel:
Standing at the edge of the shore, you see it:
A citadel sculpted from the sands,
Solitary, singing with the wind,
Proud for a moment,
Like a high greige mountain.
Through the glad day and the day to warm,
Then a wave comes by,
Crashing it down.
Yet, you relish the moment,
For the experience brought you joy.
Count your losses and begin anew,
You who craft, though the waves may take,
Leaving behind a spark for others to wake.
And the sand knows,
Cause another child wandered in,
To rebuild a beautiful citadel that sings to the sea.
When we, the team of TEDxIITGuwahati, initially brainstormed for the theme of 2025, possibilities danced before our eyes like waves catching the sunlight, transient yet vivid, hinting at something great. Our thoughts went to the mysterious sea. The process felt like standing at the shoreline where every idea, like a grain of sand, was contributing to the vision we sought to build. Amidst hundreds of images that piqued our interest were the shores, storms, sailors, surf, sea breeze, and seashells. Out of the blue, we saw it: A sandcastle standing undaunted by the tides. Startled awake from our daydreams, we reflected on the frailty of our actions and the liberation in welcoming everything that comes our way.
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What if the tides were no longer a hindrance and the concept of failure was nothing more than a passing wave? What legacy will you leave, mindful that others may tread the same shore as you? We encourage you to seek out your Citadel and strengthen it. Perhaps, what we become as we create is just as significant as what we make.
So, enter the endless sea of thoughts, where every idea, like a wave, improves the shores of knowledge and leaves an impression for a long time. As you surf on the waves that shape your Seaside Citadel, remember: Sometimes, you find yourself washed up on the shore. Other times, you look breathtakingly radiant as you conquer the waves. Occasionally, you are just getting by to the next wave, but at least you are having a blast while the waves crash around you